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INTERVIEWED

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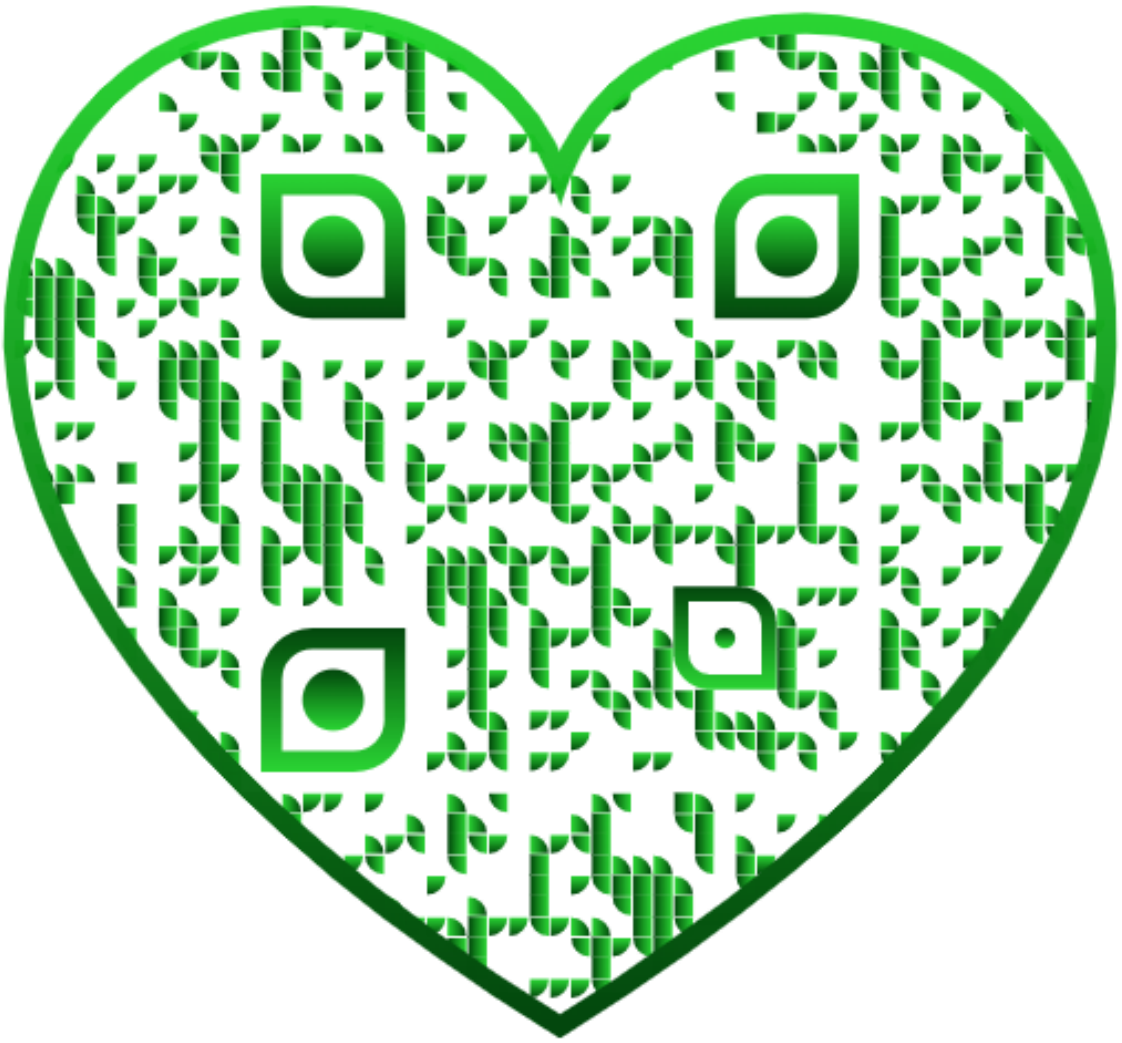

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THE ROOT NOTE

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***Acoustic* magazine is proud to support the Music Industries Association.**

I'm pretty sure that you, like me, have a favourite guitar model. And I don't mean a favourite guitar, but a favourite shape. Growing up I used to love the boom and power of the dreadnought, but in my mid-20s I was given the opportunity to play a Collings OM2H. The experience was a bit of a game-changer for me, and OMs became my new favourite. I'm fortunate enough to have a Martin OM28 in my collection and I absolutely love it. One body shape that never really got a look-in, though, was the parlour. For me, they were a bit of an enigma. Not very loud, and often producing a 'boxy' tone, I just couldn't get on with them. However, for this issue of the magazine I reviewed a special, one-off Faith Signature Series all-walnut parlour and, such was its quality and tone, I was again forced to reconsider my view. You can read the review on page 63 but this experience reminded me that we can sometimes get 'stuck' with what we believe to be our favourites. I'm not sure I would have reached for this guitar in a shop, but being put in a situation where I had to become well-acquainted with the instrument broadened my mind. I found myself playing different styles and genres of music than I normally would, and I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. It just goes to show how different guitars can open your mind, musically speaking, and take you to unexplored places. So, a suggestion. The next time you're in a shop, avoid playing those types of guitars you're already familiar with and try something altogether new – you might just surprise yourself.

Thinking ahead, we here at *Acoustic* Towers are already looking forward to the London Acoustic Show in September. Tickets are now on sale and announcements have already been made concerning some of the artists scheduled to perform. You'll be familiar with some and less so with others, but, one thing's for sure, it's already shaping up to be a fantastic roster of artists and exhibitors alike. If you haven't already done so, put the dates in your diary: 10-11 September at the now-familiar Olympia London venue. We look forward to seeing you there.

Lastly, I'm sure you'd join me in wishing *Acoustic* columnist, and all-round good guy, Gordon Giltrap a speedy recovery. Gordon recently underwent surgery to treat a rare form of cancer he is battling, and we trust he'll be on his feet and playing again soon. All at *Acoustic* extend our best wishes to Gordon and his wife Hilary.

Steve Harvey
Editor

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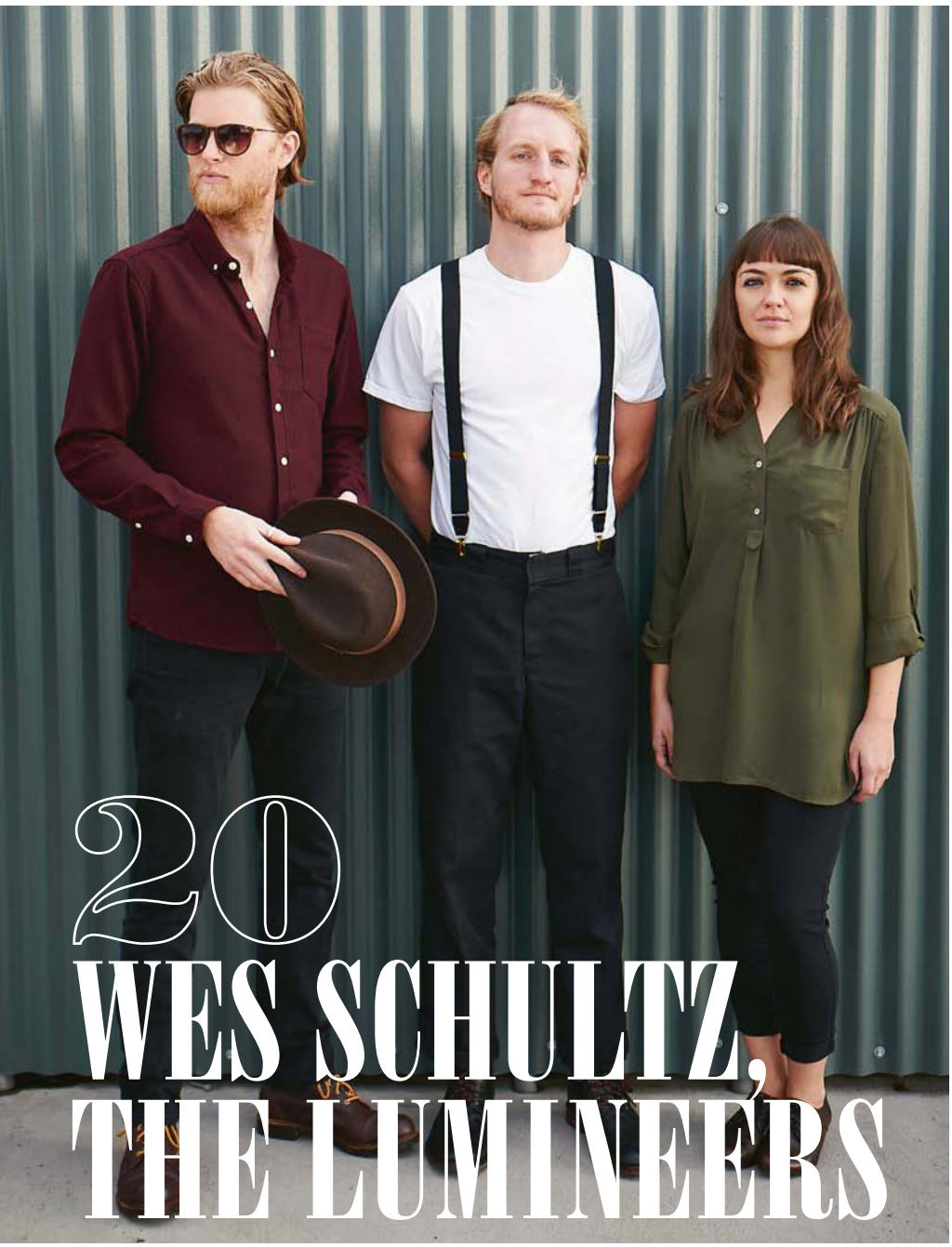

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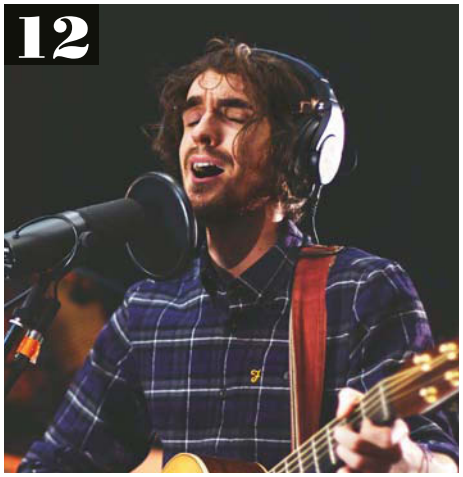

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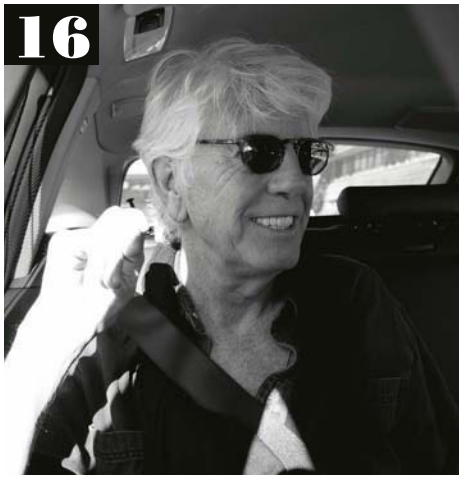

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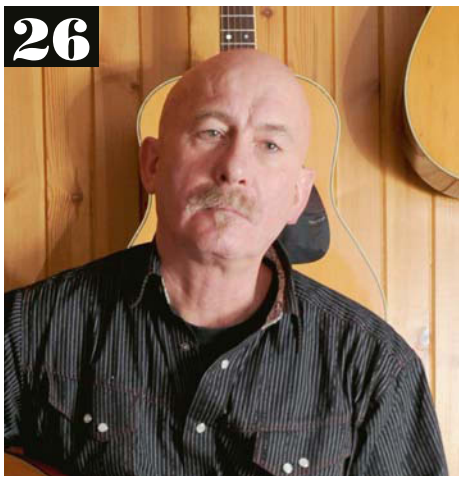

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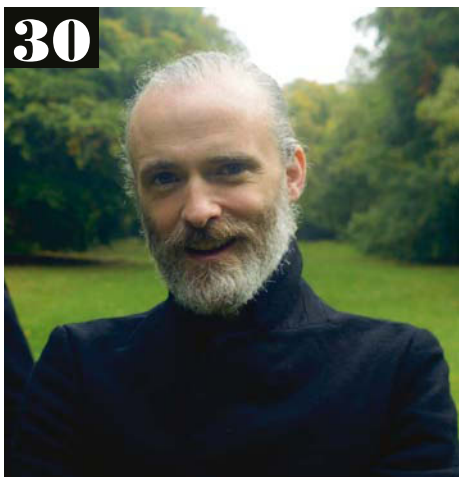

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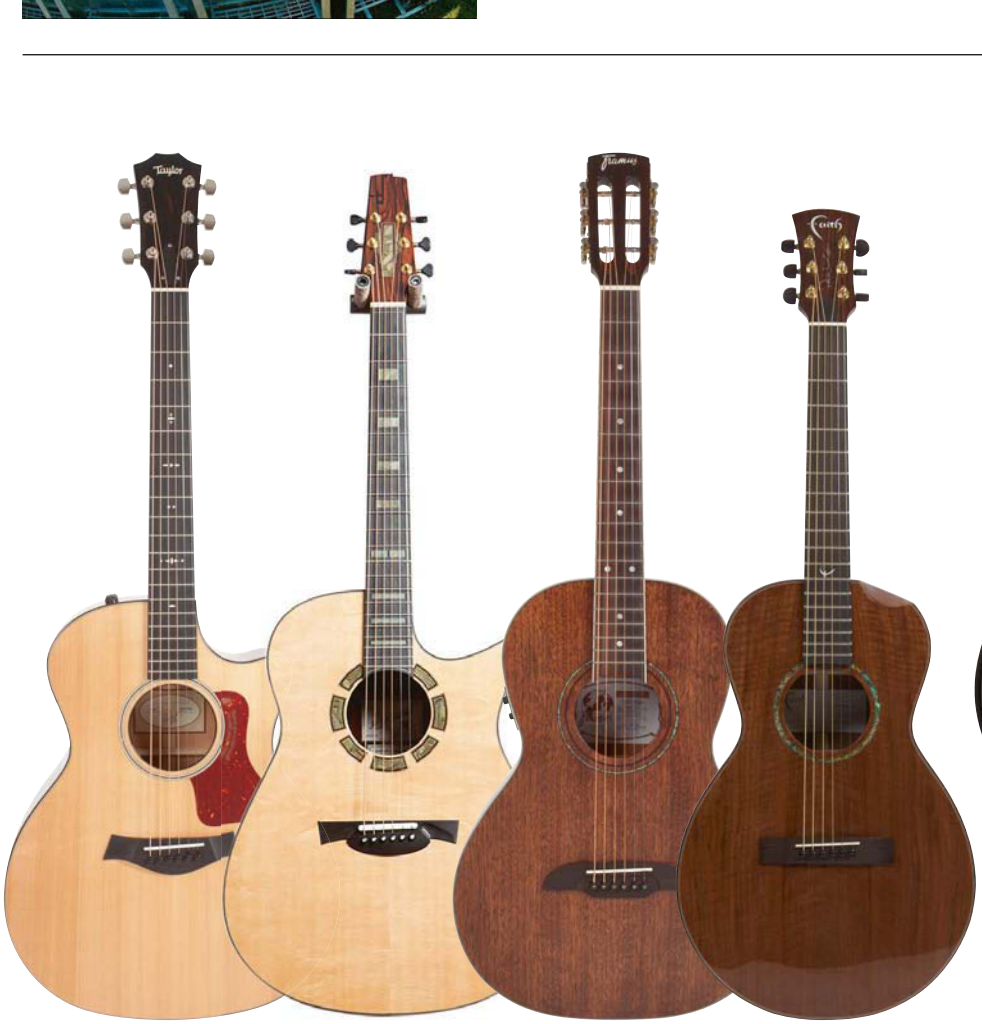

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FOR THE LATEST NEWS VISIT **WWW.ACOUSTICMAGAZINE.COM**

NEW FAITH MODELS

A good month for UK Faith Guitar fans, with their Venus Blood Moon model now back in stores following sell-outs, and newly available travel editions of their Saturn and Neptune models.

The Venus Blood Moon is an OM style electro cutaway, which, like all Faith models, uses innovative tonewoods for both sonic variety and aesthetic impact. Tonally similar in timbre to a solid mahogany instrument, it benefits from a slightly more pronounced treble response.

For those who regularly travel with their kit, Faith has also announced the UK release of two mini versions of popular Faith Saturn and Neptune models.

The (FDNMG) Nomad Mini-Neptune is a scaled-down version of the popular baby-jumbo Neptune shape and features a solid mahogany top, back and sides with a satin finish. The (FDS) Nomad Mini-Saturn is the smaller brother of Faith's popular square-shouldered dreadnought Saturn series. This features a solid spruce top and solid mahogany back and sides, again with a satin finish – all of which went down well at this year's NAMM show.

Prices: Faith Venus Blood Moon, £849; the Nomad Mini-Saturn, £429; and the Mini-Neptune, £439. Available to order from Barnes & Mullins now at ***www.bandm.co.uk***

STEVE 'N' SEAGULLS RETURN TO THE UK

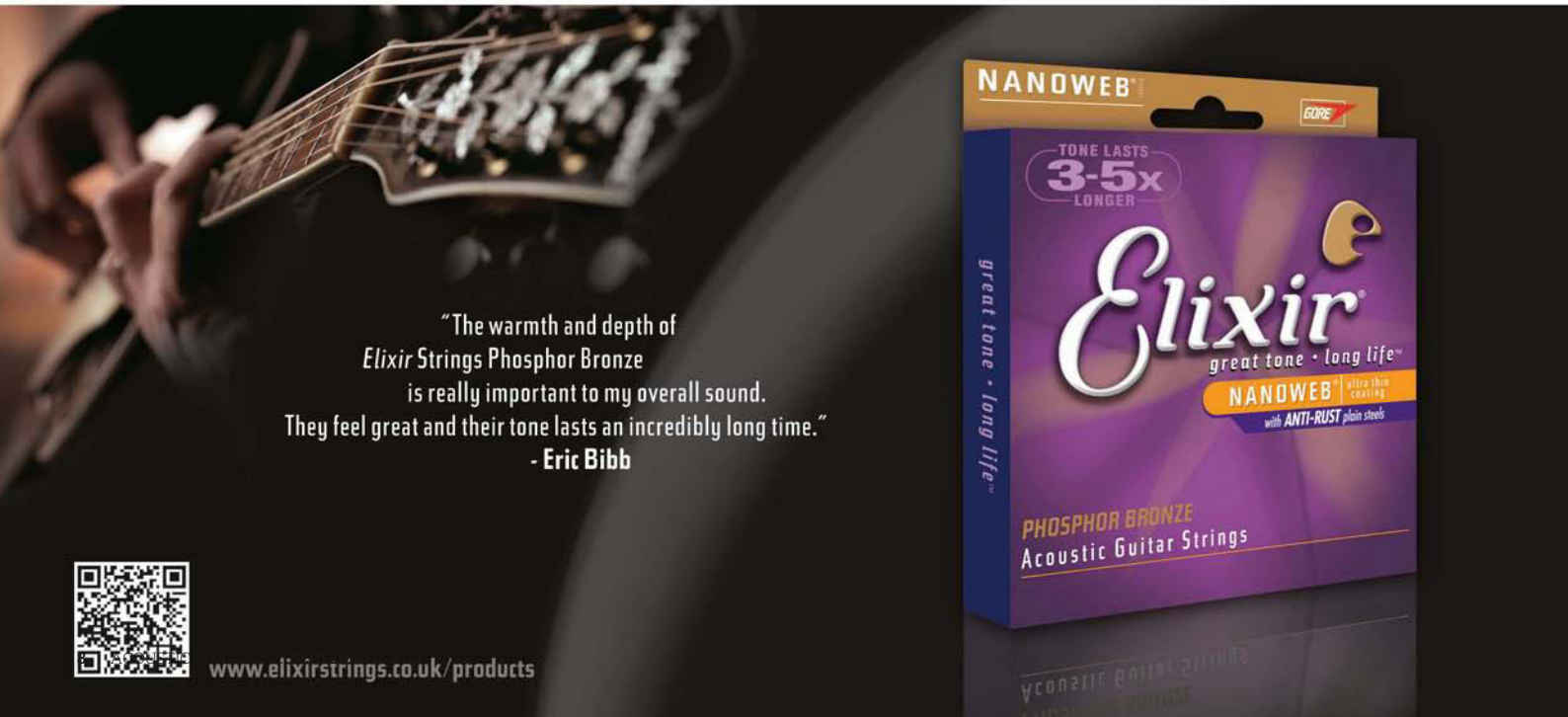
Acoustic favourites Steve 'n' Seagulls are coming back to our shores for a five-date tour in November. As if that was enough reason to grab your dungarees and get excited, the boys have finished recording their new album, which is slated for release in the autumn.

UK tour dates:
14/11/16 – The Haunt, Brighton
15/11/16 – Bush Hall, London
16/11/16 – The Globe, Cardiff
17/11/16 – Cathouse, Glasgow
18/11/16 – Deaf Institute, Manchester
Tickets are on sale now from www.myticket.co.uk

IVOR NOVELLO NOD FOR JAMIE LAWSON

Recent *Acoustic* interviewee Jamie Lawson will be raising a glass or two after having been nominated for an Ivor Novello award for single 'Wasn't Expecting That' in the Best Song Musically and Lyrically category. The track has sold almost a million copies worldwide, with over 450,000 sales in the UK alone.

Later this year, Jamie will be playing a 17-date autumn tour, kicking off on 4 October in Dublin and including a date at London's O2 Academy Brixton on 19 October. His self-titled album, released in October 2015 on Ed Sheeran's Gingerbread Man Records, reached No 1 in the UK and has sold over a quarter of a million copies worldwide.



OPEN CALL FOR FOLK FUNDING

The English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) has announced plans for two new initiatives – a major new music commission by an established or professional artist and a raft of creative seed funding bursaries. The new commission will be performed at legendary folk venues including Bristol's Colston Hall, and Cecil Sharp House, London, in March 2017.

The Creative Seed Funding Programme has been designed for emerging artists and will make three awards of £750 each to fund new work linked to the English folk arts.

Katy Spicer, EFDSS chief executive and artistic director, explains: "For the first time we will be giving musicians the opportunity to pitch a creative idea to us and our partners – The Met in Bury and Colston Hall in Bristol – rather than selecting a group of artists to creatively respond to a given subject." The EFDSS are one of 22 talent development partners for PRS for Music Foundation – with funding available for a range of musical styles and groups.

For more information, go to ***www.efdss.org/efdss-artists-development.***

efdss
english folk dance and song society

PRS for MUSIC Foundation
TALENT DEVELOPMENT PARTNER

SEEK YOUR HOLY GRAIL

The Holy Grail Guitar Show, held in Berlin, will take place on 8-9 October.

The show is the place to see the finest in luthiery, with scores of the world's most skilled guitar builders attending and displaying mind-bogglingly beautiful works of musical art.

The Show is organised by the EGB – the association of European Guitar Builders, which prides itself on providing a co-operational platform for an eclectic mix of new talent and previous exhibitors.

Discounted early bird tickets will be available from late June, with an exhibitor list preceding that in May. We'll bring you all the details as we get them.

Keep an eye on ***www.holygrailguitarshow.com*** for more news.

GEAR UP

D'Addario's designers have put their thinking caps on and come up with two new ingenious devices to tackle problems that have niggled players for years.

Humiditrak is a new climate monitoring system that works with your smartphone to decrease costly environment-related damage with real time temperature and humidity updates via Bluetooth. Simply place the small Humiditrak device in any case or musical instrument, and when it detects problematic conditions, a push notification is sent to the player's phone, allowing them to take action before damage occurs. Like a baby monitor – but for your guitar.

For frequently gigging musicians, the chromatic NS Micro Soundhole Tuner is a tuner that remains perfectly concealed within the instrument's soundhole for discreet tuning. The non-marring universal mounting clip allows stress-free installation, while the highly sensitive piezo transducer senses vibrations directly from the soundboard for fast and accurate tuning response. The bright, multi-colour display allows easy viewing in any environment.

Prices: Humiditrak, £56; and NS Micro Soundhole Tuner, £16.90.

See ***www.daddario.com*** for more info.

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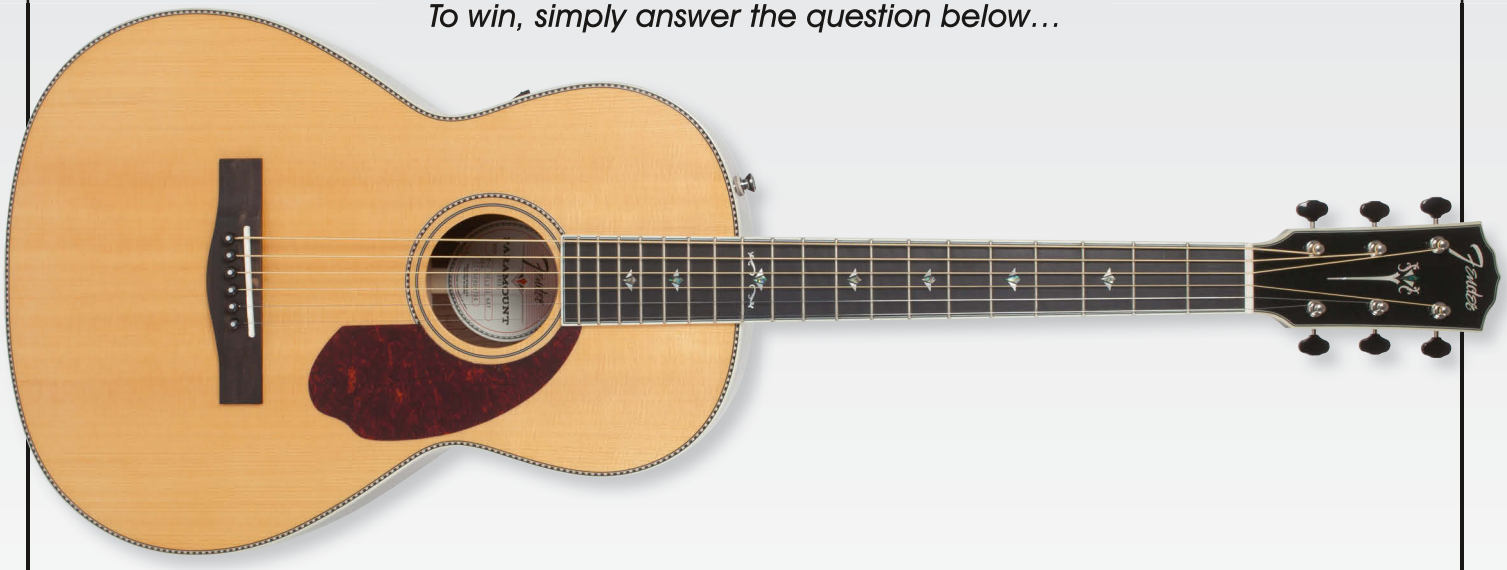
In the market for an all-solid parlour guitar? Well you're in luck, because we're giving away a stunning Fender Paramount Parlour Deluxe to one lucky reader. Sporting a Sitka spruce top with East Indian rosewood back and sides, this little beauty from Fender's newest acoustic range proved a hit when it was reviewed in *Acoustic* 115.

To win, simply answer the question below…



The Fender Paramount Parlour Deluxe's neck joins the body at which fret?

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ASK THE EXPERTS

THE MUSICIANS' UNION GIVES ADVICE ON HOW TO MAKE SURE HEARING PROBLEMS DON'T AFFECT YOUR CAREER. LISTEN UP

Musicians are four times more likely to suffer hearing problems than members of the general public, according to a recent survey by Help Musicians UK. Musicians are 57 per cent more likely to suffer tinnitus, and 78 per cent of musicians with hearing loss surveyed believe that their job was to blame. So what can you do to protect your ears – and your career?

It's important to know about noise exposure and the damage it does. Noise is measured in decibels (dB) and there are two action levels — these are at 80dB(A) and 85dB(A). Typical dB(A) levels reached by a rock band can be anything up to 125dB(A) and for a symphony orchestra, 94dB(A). The most important factor is the loudness of the sound in relation to how long the musician is exposed to that sound.

Noise induced hearing damage is not just an issue for pop, rock and metal players. A survey conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health found that 15 per cent of classical musicians suffered from permanent tinnitus, compared to 2 per cent among the general population. Some people can still suffer hearing damage even when their exposure is within the legal limits. So anyone who is regularly exposed to loud noise should have regular hearing tests.

As a musician, you may have a closer relationship with sound than an average person. As such, any small change in your hearing could have a much larger impact on your life and livelihood.

That's why we set up the Musicians' Hearing Passport scheme in partnership with the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM) and the Musicians' Hearing Services (MHS). Freelance MU members can take advantage of MHS' hearing health surveillance scheme at a reduced cost of £30. The scheme includes an in-depth examination by audiologists, a full written report outlining the results, regular call-back checks and a discount on custom made noise-attenuating earplugs.

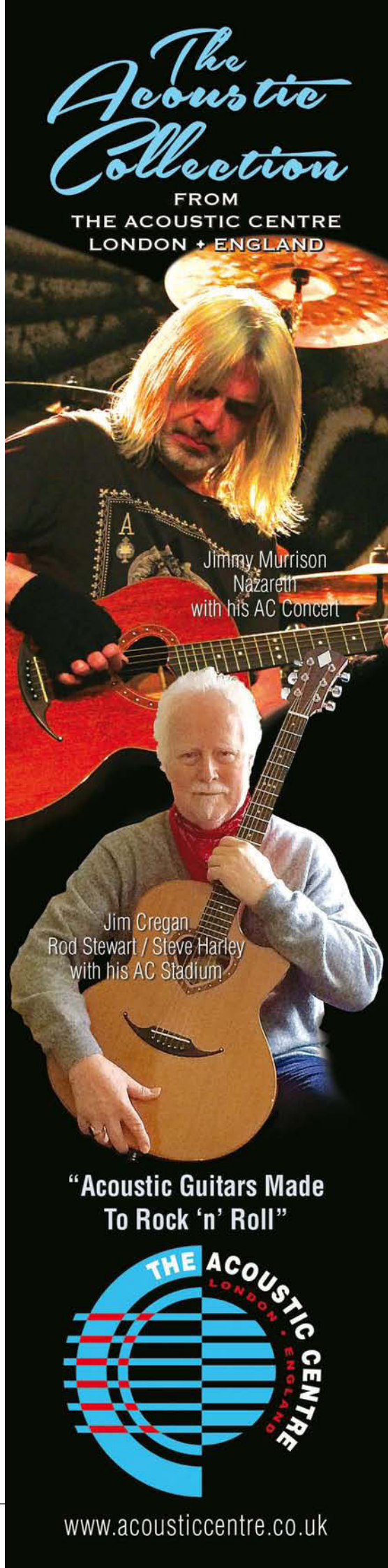
Another good resource of overall information is given on the Health and Safety Executive's Sound Advice website, *soundadvice.info*.

What if you're employed? "In an employed situation it is the duty of the employer to provide testing and undertake a raft of measures to reduce the exposure before resorting to the provision of personal protection," says Dave Webster, MU national organiser for live performance.

Responsibility for ensuring that all premises comply with the Control Of Noise At Work Regulations 2005 (CNWR) rests with local authority enforcement officers, who have powers to serve a Health & Safety Improvement Notice if an employer or engager's premises are found to be in breach of the regulations.

Hearing checks will not prevent hearing damage, but regular checks will allow early identification of signs of hearing loss and highlight the need for action to be taken to reduce the risk of any further damage. ■

Get more advice on protecting your hearing, including details of the Musicians' Hearing Passport, and any other aspect of your career via *theMU.org*.



BLAIR DUNLOP

Twenty-four-year-old Blair Dunlop is about to drop his third solo album, Gilded. It's a record with a lot to give, and its creator will be bringing it to stage this spring and summer. We met to discuss studio sounds, sonic cohesion and Nic Jones's rock solid right hand

WORDS: MORGAN MATTHEWS **IMAGES PROVIDED BY:** REPUBLIC MEDIA

"I wrote the songs on *Gilded* during a quite intense period of my life when I moved to London," Blair begins, "so there wasn't a driving force behind them as such, I just wrote them as a collection at that time, and that's what came out. It felt like a natural progression from the last one, really," he continues, "and it was a great recording experience, being up in Manchester at Blue Print Studios, with Fred and Jacob, who I'm going on tour with soon. It all felt very organic and I'm pleased with how it turned out."

Unlike his previous efforts *House of Jacks* and *Blight and Blossom*, much of *Gilded* was tracked live, which gives it less of a studio sound than the other albums and a more confident and graceful feel. "We blitzed it on a two-week period," he grins, "so we got most of it down then. I did a few overdubs later, but mostly it was done then with the three of us in the room at once. It was a much less disparate process than the previous records and it worked really well. The room was this great old Victorian one with a lot of space, which I think you can hear on the album. It felt like the room fed the sound on the recording, which is really cool."

Recording more material live instead of tracking and stitching together the pieces is a far more intuitive method, and it often signifies a certain confidence in an artist and their colleagues. "Yes, I think that's definitely a factor," he answers. "The more I play, and the more we play, I have realised that we can actually play well live; and even if parts of the song are composite, a lot of it is the first take and I quite like the idea of not having it over-polished. This one is a little bit rough around the edges in certain parts, like when a chair squeaks on one of the tracks, that kind of thing. I think it all just adds to the atmosphere, and I don't know if that comes from it being a different recording experience and wanting to get a raw feel on there, but I like the results."

One thing to notice about *Gilded* is the strong narrative approach on some songs. "Most of that writing style comes from growing up in the folk scene," he explains. "And although people still consider me a folk artist – even though I don't think this album is a folk record – there is still a linear narrative element to the writing, and I think that comes from growing up with that traditional English music."

> **"I'm confused and angry about a lot of stuff, because I'm a 24-year-old guy learning about the world"**

When it comes to influences from that genre, Blair is quick to focus on certain players. "Nic Jones is big for me, definitely," he says. "And what I love about his playing is that it's pretty much all in his right hand. He doesn't do too much with his left hand, but the right is like a train and he can sing over the phrasing and melodies of that rock steady right hand. His playing has an energy to it that I love, and people like him and Martin Carthy have influenced me hugely.

"Around the time when I was listening to Nic and his down-tuned stuff, Andy McKee was going viral on YouTube and I had just started messing around with instrumental playing and different tunings, so he was also a big influence for me."

There are sounds coming through on *Gilded* that veer off from Blair's acoustic roots, but at the same time, the songs themselves seem to have the box at their core; is it intentional? "Well, because of the narrative element to a lot of the songs, they sound good stripped back," he answers. "But all of the songs I write are interchangeable, really, and I can pretty much play all of them stripped back or more band orientated." So are they approached the same either way? "I don't necessarily divide them into electric or non-electric, but when I'm playing them I approach them differently. Mainly because," he continues with a laugh, "with the acoustic, I can do a lot of hitting and slamming with my right hand, but if you do that on an electric you sound really bad! So there is a guitarist's distinction, but only in the arrangement, not in the songs themselves. But ultimately, at this point in my career, I consider myself an acoustic musician first and foremost, so that's probably why the songs are arranged with that acoustic core."

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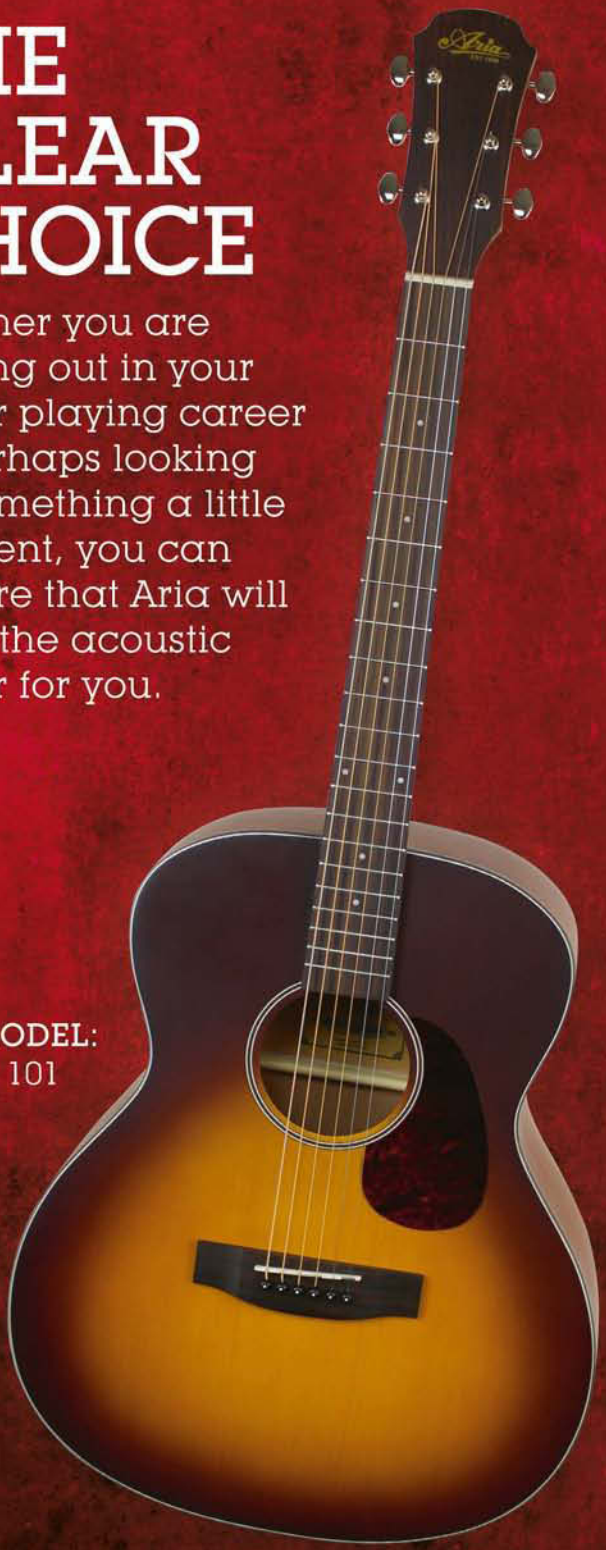

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Alongside the narratives on Blair's new album are some quite direct songs, notably 'First World Problem', with its "Money talks, at the expense of workers' welfare, quality of produce, culture and the sustainability of the planet" lyric. "I wrote that one with my friend Gavin [Davenport] from the Albion Band when we were touring a few years ago," the singer explains. "We never actually got it down, because we disbanded before we went into the studio, so that song was only gigged. I've used it because I really like the song and I feel it is still as relevant now. It's not like much has changed in the last three years," he adds. "I'm confused and angry about a lot of stuff, because I'm a 24-year-old guy growing up and learning about the world and how annoying it can be. And the issues mentioned are still issues. In a way, that song will probably be more timeless than I would like it to be."

Although the subject matter can juxtapose on record, Blair was careful to ensure fluidity throughout, something that comes across upon listening. "It's good to have an album that is cohesive," he points out, "but that cohesion can come from the sound or a voice, or the narrative, or the phrasing. It can come from any of those things, so I don't think it should be an album of relationship songs, or only songs about 'x' or 'y'. These new songs were recorded in a two week period in a studio on lock down, and we feel the energy comes from that time and not from where or when a song was written or what it is about. I do like light and shade on record," he adds, "but again, you can have that and still have the consistency throughout, which I hope comes through on *Gilded*."

As a keen and passionate musician, Blair is quite particular about his trade tools, so it looks good for Tanglewood that he speaks so highly of his MasterDesign guitars. "For me it's so important to have the right guitar," he says. "For one thing it's such a shame when you go to a gig and the guitar sounds rubbish, but also I find it's a real confidence boost having a guitar that I like. It really matters. I currently play a TSM 1, which is an OM shape, and a TSM 3, which is a jumbo and it makes me look like a boy when I play it because I'm small anyway, but it sounds so good! I often tune that down to C, and the OMs are drop D and standard at the moment. Both have mahogany back and sides and sound great; the pickups are B Band under-saddle piezos, and they sound really warm, particularly with fingerstyle playing."

Having mentioned tunings on his Tanglewoods, I press him a little further on his preferences. "I started messing around with DADGAD initially," he says. "That led to other D tunings like DADEAD and stuff like that. I also got a Csus2 tuning from Nic Jones, which is CGCGCD; that's a really cool tuning. But nowadays and on the new album, it's really either standard or drop D. I'm heading toward playing more in standard, because it's a challenge for me, but a lot of the new one is in drop D, which I find is a cross between standard and altered, and I'm loving it. I'm doing a lot of hybrid picking, where you hold a pick between finger and thumb and use the other three fingers to accentuate on the top strings. That technique works really well in drop D, and a lot of the album is played that way. I do like having one or two around that are tuned alternately though... Maybe I'll give the Tanglewood guys a call to ask them to send me a new guitar and just plead 'I've got this other tuning I want to try out, you see…'" ■

Gilded is out 6 May.

www.blairdunlop.com

GRAHAM NASH

Graham Nash remains one of the most recognisable names in the music industry. His time with Crosby, Stills & Nash – and later Young – cemented his position in the upper echelons of music history. Here, as he releases his first album of original material for 14 years, he opens up about the pain needed to write the record…

WORDS: ANDY HUGHES **IMAGES PROVIDED BY:** FIFTH AVENUE PR

Labels like 'legend' and hero' are often thrown around without genuine merit, to describe musicians whose impact on music and culture have been far less than that of Graham Nash, the English 60s pop star who went on to form the ground-breaking folk-rock band Crosby, Stills & Nash.

Nash has enjoyed massive success as a pop and folk-rock songwriter, and has created a highly respected parallel career as a photographer, where he is considered something of a pioneer in the art of digital photography and reproduction.

Now, at the age of 74, Nash's life is changing. He and his wife Susan are divorcing after 38 years of marriage, a new direction that has seen him write and record a new album – *This Path Tonight* – his first album of original songs for 14 years.

They say talent does what it can; genius does what it must – so Nash's answer to the question regarding his new collection of songs comes as no surprise. "I really had no choice. Going through such emotional changes over the last year of divorce, and new love, and all this music came out. Shane Fontayne who produced the record did a brilliant job, and I wrote 20 songs in a month."

No one would wish emotional upheaval on any musician, but there is no doubt that it does an excellent job of firing up the creative spirit. "It certainly works in my case!" Nash agrees with a rueful smile. "I write about what affects me in my life, and usually you find a lot of people are going through the same changes."

Time to talk about the new album, and on first hearing, the song 'Myself At Last' stands out for its gorgeous guitar work. "That was my Lowden. I love Lowden guitars, and with those and my Martins and Gibsons, I have all my favourites for recording and for playing live on stage, taken care of.

"Actually, that song cam from the first take of the first song when we came to start making the record. Once I had that first take done, I knew the record was going to be OK, and it was. People like Neil Young and me, we believe in early takes being the best takes."

> **"I have to be in one of two mental states to produce a song: I either have to be in love, or furious"**

Do you remember your first acoustic guitar? "I do remember it. It was a Nevin and it was a very cheap model! My first proper guitar, which I had in the Hollies, was an Epiphone Texan from 1961, it had the Hollies' name written on the pick guard. That guitar has disappeared; I have no idea where it is now. I have checked all my storage areas, and it's not there. It's a guitar I would love to have back, I wrote 'Marrakesh Express' on it, and 'Teach Your Children', so it is a guitar I am attached to and I miss. I have a collection of about 60 guitars; they are all in temperature-controlled storage. I do take them out from time to time and play them, but when I am on the road I just use the guitars I have with me, they get played the most."

Let's discuss composition – you have worked with one other writer, and with two and three writers in various combinations, does the dynamic vary depending on the set-up? "I don't think it does, not really," Nash decides after a moment's thought. "Some songs are for a solo performance, and some demand a harmony. CSN had a rule that we only recorded songs that all three of us liked, not just one, or two of us. We all have to be committed to the emotion of the song before we do it.

"People I meet are always fascinated by the writing process, they ask about where I was when I wrote this song or that song, and what was going through my mind at the time. Songwriting is different for everyone; some writers can sit down at nine in the morning, strum their guitar, find a few chords, and start working on a song. Others have to have some inspiration, and I am definitely one of those. In my experience, I have to be in one of two mental states to produce a song: I either have to be in love, or be furious. It would be fair to say that over recent months, and certainly during the writing and recording of my new album, I have been both!"

A new album means, of course, a tour. "I am always excited to be on the road. When I know I have a decent song, and I have played it for friends and family and they react really well, the first thing I want to do is play it for an audience.

We never got into this for the money. It's great to have the money and be able to buy the amplifiers and put petrol in the van, but if it was just about the money, I wouldn't bother making music and taking it out on tour."

It's difficult to remember when you talk to him, or see him on stage, but Nash is 74 years old. He's been active as a musician for nearly 60 years, and in that time, he's seen myriad changes in technology – both in studio and live settings. "I do enjoy technology, and use it when it is appropriate. But, and I say this on stage some times, no amount of technology can make a bad song into a good song.

"We were the first band to actually tour stadiums. We were young and on fire, we were groundbreaking and we knew it. People asked us if we felt intimidated by the size of the crowds we played to in those first shows. We are the band who played 'Guinevere' with two voices and one acoustic guitar to the audience at Woodstock Festival. Were we going to be fazed by an audience of 80,000? I don't think so!"

What memories have stuck with him from Woodstock? "It was unlike anything anyone had ever seen before, it really was… that many people in one place. Of course, my memories are warmed by the passage of a lot of years. I loved Stephen Stills' comment as the helicopter flew over the site, and he said it was like flying over the encampment of the Macedonian armies!"

While talking about memories, and times gone by, it's an appropriate time to ask Nash if any songs, or albums, stand out in his stellar career.

"As a writer, the stock answer is always 'the song I am writing now.' That is often true, but having written *Wild Tales*, my autobiography, and thought about these things, I realise that there are things that stand out. The first thing is the first Crosby, Stills & Nash record, a fantastic piece of music. I enjoyed 'On A Carousel', 'Bus Stop' and 'Carrie Anne', the Hollies songs, 'Suite: Judy Blue Eyes', and 'Guinevere' are amazing. Of mine, 'Cathedral' and 'Teach Your Children', maybe."

OK, time to come back to the present, and discuss Nash's new album. There is a sense of urgency in the delivery of the lyrics in 'Another Broken Heart' – was Nash aware of that in his own singing? "Absolutely! I want nothing between my emotional journey and yours. There are a couple of tracks that I have sung in a way I have never really sung before. I have a high voice, but 'Another Broken Heart' is almost whispered and spoken. It was just what I felt the emotion of the song demanded. Like with my book *Wild Tales*, I wanted it to sound like I am talking to you in your kitchen."

Not that he needs reminding of his position in terms of his contribution to pop music in general, and acoustic music in particular – but Nash received the NAMM Music For Life Award this year, the organisation's highest accolade. NAMM is the National Association of Music Merchants, the most important music trade fair in the world. Its awards are serious – recognition of the recipients by the movers and shakers of the world's music community, and Nash was delighted to be recognised. "I don't think musicians who are serious about what they do start out with the intention of being millionaires, but it is nice to have your work recognised. NAMM understands that if music is on the school curriculum, grades go up, pupils have better self-esteem, they spend less time forming into gangs, and yet when there are budget cuts, it's always music or arts that go to the wall. So this award was welcome recognition from the people who do know what music means in society."

Our time with the music legend is drawing to a close, so the final question has to be about Nash's approach to his career now – the legendary past, and the still relevant, forward-looking future. "The only time I really looked back with any degree of intensity was when I was writing my autobiography." Nash considers. "I am really not someone who looks back into the past. I do understand what I have done, where I have been, and the fantastic experiences I have had, and the people I have met. I am so lucky that my parents never dissuaded me from my passion.

"What I never forget is that I am still an ordinary person. I just happen to do something extraordinary with my time." ■

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THE LUMINEERS

Difficult second album syndrome? Not so for Wes Schultz and the Lumineers. With new album Cleopatra atop the charts, we speak to the man who just can't understand why people consider having a successful debut album creates pressure...

WORDS: NICK ROBBINS **IMAGES PROVIDED BY:** PURPLE PR

Wes Schultz is a man content with his lot. As the frontman for indie-pop leading lights the Lumineers, he's ascended to the peak of the music industry. Thrust into the spotlight on the back of his band's mega-single 'Ho Hey' in 2012 – a song you've heard even if you think you haven't, so ubiquitous was its reach – Schultz, songwriting partner Jeremiah Fraites and cellist and vocalist Neyla Pekarek went from performing in clubs and living rooms to performing at Glastonbury, picking up Grammy nominations and touring across the world.

Yet as he speaks to *Acoustic*, apologising as he negotiates the backstage area of Bristol's Academy venue to get some privacy, he's dealing with the news that his band's new album *Cleopatra* is being tipped to top the Billboard chart in America (and the UK album chart, too), with a projected sales figure of over 100,000 copies. A few days later this will be made official, with the true number sitting around 28,000 copies higher than the midweek prediction. Tonight, he'll be performing songs from that album for the first time in front of a live audience in the UK. You wouldn't know it, though...

"I feel pretty numb to it, honestly," he says. "It hasn't happened, so I don't want to jinx it, but it really feels great that this time has passed and people have had enough patience and cared enough to remember us to get the new record."

It's not just the fans who have remembered the Lumineers, however. "We actually had to cancel our last show here [in Bristol], so that's the reason we're starting here tonight, because we didn't get to play a show here last time, unfortunately. So it's like a 'thanks for being patient' gesture."

Patience is a theme that comes up repeatedly for Schultz. Following the success of 'Ho Hey', the follow up single 'Stubborn Love' and the Lumineers' eponymous debut album, fans around the world were able to see the band live, but new recorded material proved elusive. With the release of *Cleopatra* at the start of April 2016, the fans' patience was rewarded, some four years later.

> **"I think everything about touring changes you... and inevitably that does creep into some of the songs"**

"We would have loved to put it out two years earlier," Schultz tells us, "but we just kept getting more doors opening and invitations to different countries, and it was really difficult to say no to them. It's an honour to feel like your music is travelling that far and you want to meet the fans in the middle.

"Every time we would stop touring, every time we thought we were done – and we're not talking very long off the road, it would be like a week or 10 days – there would be another person saying 'Hey, Australia wants you to come and do a tour there', or it was Japan, China, South America or South Africa. Our last tour ended in December 2014 in South Africa. We played to 15,000 people at our last show in Johannesburg. It was amazing."

For all the highs, four years of touring can still be a gruelling experience, and, according to Schultz, there was an acute awareness that the band were reaching the point where they needed to begin the writing process.

"Every time there was a date or a new country added, it was bittersweet," he says. "I remember sitting in Italy and just shaking my head, like all I wanted to do was write a new record. When we finally played that South Africa show and we finished, I was happy because of how the show went, but I was also happy because I knew that marked the last show and we could finally get on with what we'd probably been wanting to do for a few years at that point."

So it was that within two weeks of coming off the road, Schultz and Fraites were writing the new album, drawing on the experiences of touring ("I think everything about the touring changes you. Inevitably all that time spent on the road becomes part of who you are, and it creeps into some of the songs"), but without a stash of completed songs to work on.

"We tried writing the whole time we were on the road," he admits. "I remember we finished our first record and began trying to write the

"The magical quality of songwriting is that sometimes even the person playing it doesn't realise how good it is"

second. We had a few months' period of time where we were off, and I remember Jeremiah and I trying to write more because we knew we wanted to keep writing. It was an inspirational moment. So some of those seeds that were left over made it on the second album. But a lot of them were just that… they remained seeds.

"When you tour like we were touring, the amount of things they have you do every day, the amount of travel, everything, it adds up, and it makes it really hard and surprisingly difficult to write. We even built a mobile recording rig. It was a little box that, like a Transformer, could turn into an entire mobile studio in a green room. I think that backfired on us a little bit in the sense that we went into that room and we felt this pressure to write. I don't even think one good idea came out of that, but we did end up using our phones a lot, just the little voice memo recording function. That's pretty much where we harvested all our ideas from for this record."

With the road having proven an unfavourable muse, Schultz attempted to recreate the process that had been so successful on their debut.

"With Jeremiah, I tried to create a habitat that was similar to the one we've always been used to writing in. We began writing at his parents' place, because they had this room up there on the third floor that they never used, so they let us use that to set up and make music, and we did that for five to six years. Then we moved to into a house in Denver and did the same thing in the basement. It's always been in a house setting with furniture and pictures on the walls – somewhere that felt like home.

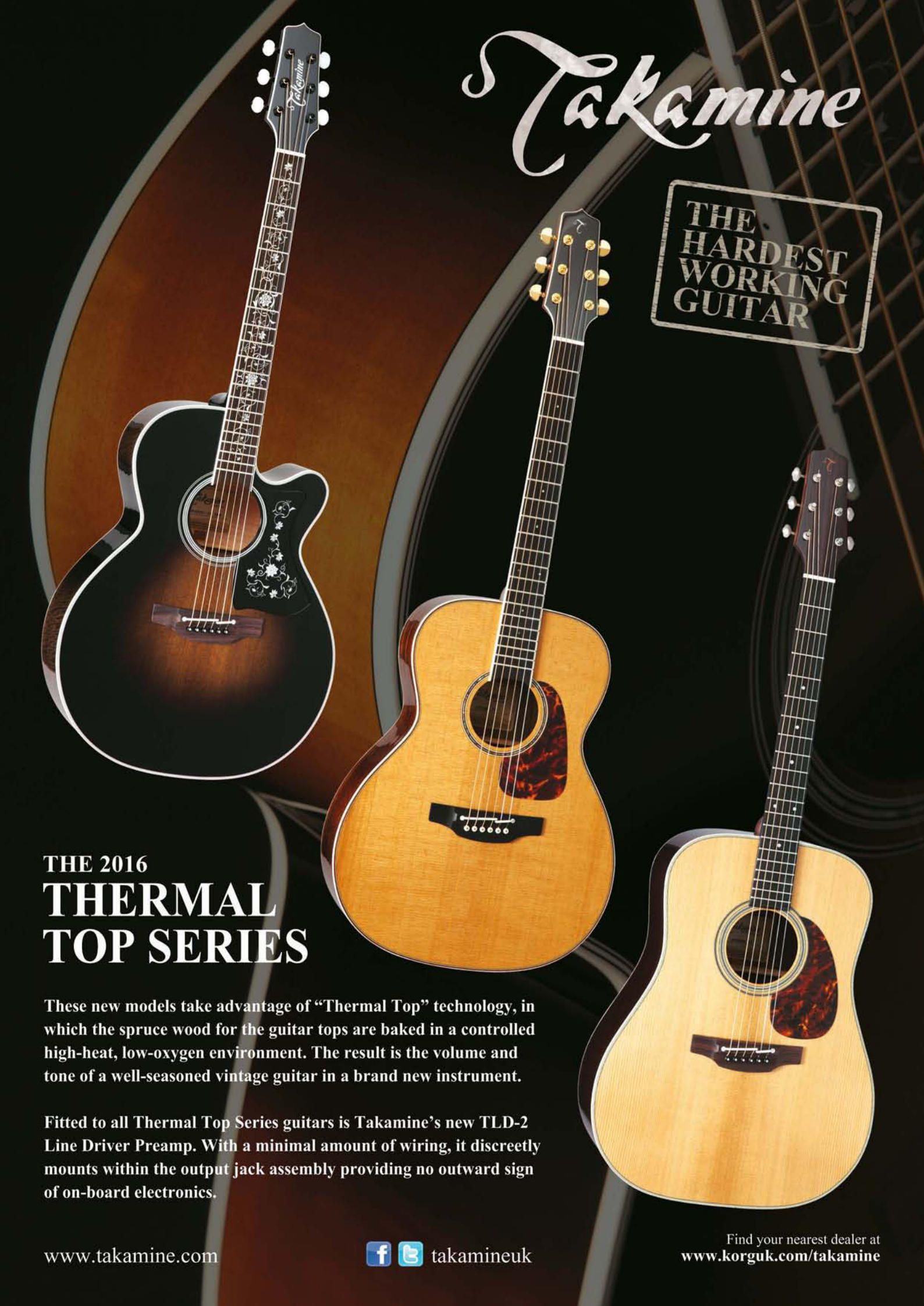
"This time around we rented a small house in a sleepy neighbourhood in Denver and just worked the house like you would a nine-to-five. The neighbours never really realised what we were doing. We never had a single visit or a complaint about noise. We were always doing work when they were at work."

That focus on treating songwriting like a job would put Schultz and the band at odds with scores of other musicians – and have legions of us asking our school career advisers why we were never told that it was even an option – but it is, for Schultz, an approach born from years of experience.

"It was two things. One was trying to forget what you were there for, just be there and things will happen. And the other thing was putting in the hours. Our songs began to improve a while ago when we were spending a lot of time in the same area, the same place, and even the same room. There'd be these ideas happening when you were doing something else mundane. I would stop and say 'What is that?' And Jeremiah would say 'I don't know. What do you mean?' I'd hum it and he'd play it again. That's the magical quality of songwriting – sometimes the person playing it doesn't realise how good it is."

With the resulting album written in the most part during these sessions – Schultz reveals that 'Angela' came about entirely in the studio – the Lumineers were about to release a record that was loaded with expectations. Not only had the fans been eagerly waiting for new music, but they also had the mammoth success of the previous album to contend with. Pressure? Not really, says Schultz.

"Were we under pressure because the record did well? I don't connect with that idea at all.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I would much rather have people waiting to hear a new record than not," he says. "I felt like it gave me a little more freedom to do something different than if it was a brand new, anonymous band that all of a sudden was trying to put out a record. Success didn't feel like a negative. A lot of people, when they discuss the first album and the last few years, make it seem like this great tragedy has happened, and in fact it was the opposite."

Schultz does admit he felt the band was misunderstood, particularly in the press, after the success of 'Ho Hey' and 'Stubborn Love', but clearly he doesn't dwell on it.

"If there was any pressure it was more that I know we did something special on that first album – and I was frightened of people not hearing it because I don't know how many of those I have left in me. There are these magical and fertile times in a career or in a life where the timing is right for everything, and all of a sudden you're making this thing that you couldn't have planned out. So I was only hoping that we were still in that fertile area because it did feel even more special on this one."

And, if chart success on both sides of the Atlantic wasn't proof that the band were still in a musically fertile area, *Cleopatra* has received rave reviews across the music press, with many pointing to its more mature, complex lyrics compared to its predecessor. Stand-out album tracks include the lead single 'Ophelia', a thinly veiled treatise on the vagaries of fame; 'Sick in the Head', an atmospheric album cut; and 'Gun Song', which details the experience of Schultz finding a gun in his father's drawer as a child. The maturing of Schultz's lyrics is echoed in the sound of the band. It's moodier, perhaps, but also fuller and richer.

"I can trace that change back to one moment," he says. "I was in New York and I went back to this place called Rivington Street Guitars. I saw this Guild on the wall and I almost knew I was going to buy it immediately. I picked it up, played a couple of chords and said 'I'll take it'. The guy just looked at me like I had two heads.

"I used it in the set that night and I've used it ever since. It's almost like a hybrid between an electric sound and an acoustic sound, and it bridged the gap between what I had been doing on the first record and what I found more interesting."

Alongside his now go-to Guild, Wes was in a position to rely upon a bevy of other desirable guitars for inspiration on the new record, too.

"I began playing on a Yamaha FG150 – my mum's guitar. That was my favourite guitar, but it was a little bit temperamental for the road and what I was asking it to put up with. But I still loved it and stuck with it. Then we got robbed in broad daylight in LA and they took my mum's guitar and my backup, and the cello and the bass guitar. So, after that I went back to the Yamahas briefly, but I found the Martin 0018 was essentially the same guitar but could hold up to the abuse a little longer. I ended up with some ones from the 50s, 60s and even 70s that have held up well, and those are the ones that I play now. They're pretty dinged up and scratched from the strumming on a lot of the first record... and that's what I love about them.

"Then I also really fell in love with this Gibson F25," he adds. "It's got a white pickguard on the bottom and the top. A lot of song ideas sprung from that guitar. It had flatwounds on it and it was just a really silky..." He takes a second to look for the right description, and then adds: "It almost felt like you were playing a classical guitar and an acoustic that had had a baby. A lot of great ideas came from that."

> **"Were we under pressure because the record did well? I don't connect with that idea at all"**

As show time draws nearer, and the expectant fans begin to make their trek to the venue, we round up our interview by asking Schultz to reflect on the success he has found with the Lumineers, and whether he would do anything differently in hindsight.

"It doesn't come naturally for me to think that way," he says. "We made tons of mistakes, I'll tell you that. But nothing that I felt we could have really prevented."

And what of the success: what does that look like to Schultz?

"I'm just trying to make a body of work, over a long period of time, that naturally evolves. But success for me isn't determined by one or two records – it takes a long period of time, so I'm patient with it. I hope at the end of it that the songwriting is what I'm about and the songs hold up over a long period of time."

***Cleopatra* is out now.**
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FRASER NIMMO

Bob Battersby chats to a bastion of the UK folk scene, Fraser Nimmo, who, over a drop of Glenturret, delves back into his long and illustrious career

WORDS & IMAGES: BOB BATTERSBY

Back in the late 1960s, British singer-songwriters began to develop a distinctive 'troubadour' style. Drawing on human experience and personal observation, their songs had a narrative, ballad quality to them, combined with wry, subtle humour. Although still including American folk and blues influences, British traditional, jazz and classical themes frequently found their way into the melodies.

In the early 1970s a young Fraser Nimmo, armed only with a Martin 00-18 and a degree in theology, moved from Scotland to London and joined this burgeoning scene.

"We decided to move back to Perthshire a few years ago as my wife was unwell," he explains, as we sit in his studio overlooking the Scottish countryside. "She sadly died in 2009, and my career took something of a backseat for a while." Over a coffee, and later a fine Glenturret single malt, Fraser gives me some background on his career.

"I got my first guitar when I was 17 with some leftover holiday money. It was a second-hand Yairi, an excellent Japanese nylon strung instrument, although I hadn't a clue about its quality when I bought it. I went into the shop and said 'I want a guitar – what can I get for £14?' and walked out with it."

Like many teenage guitarists he played every waking hour, 'The House of the Rising Sun' being the first song he remembers learning because, as he points out, it has five chords, which was two more than most songs in those days.

"My pals thought me incredibly clever, the girls stopped regarding me as a bad smell and I started to get party invitations, so long as I brought the guitar! The fact that my guitar was nylon strung pushed me in an 'acoustic' direction so I got into anything folky. Scottish, Irish, American, Contemporary, it did not seem to matter so long as I was playing."

A couple of years later, using that same guitar, he did his first TV show, *Sunday Set*, for the BBC.

"The fee was 12 guineas (£12.60) plus five pounds, ten shillings and sixpence expenses (£5.52), so my first 'big' gig paid for the guitar." Around this time the guys at his local folk club suggested that, for a more balanced sound when finger picking and a louder, more effective one when strumming, he try a steel strung guitar. This led him to buy the first of his Yamahas.

"I got it on hire purchase, as in pay the deposit then head for the hills, for £109," he recalled. "My father was furious when the bailiffs turned up at the manse door for the money but he paid up and then calmed down a bit when I told him, over a melting telephone line, that it could have been worse. 'What do you mean?' he bellowed and, being a minister, boy could he bellow! 'How could it possibly have been worse?' 'Well', I replied, 'I almost bought a motorbike', (which was his worst fear). Silence. It was never mentioned again."

To this day, when anyone asks him how to get started on the guitar, he always suggests two things: buy a budget Yamaha and learn 'The House of the Rising Sun'.

In that vein, what were his early musical influences? "I was brought up in a household where Robert Burns hovered five feet off the ground and farted apple blossom into baskets of receptive rose petals," he explains. 'I loved the poetry but most of the song accompaniments were a bit twee and pianocentric." In those early years he tried a few Burns songs on guitar, but it was not until Maartin Allcock introduced his ears to open tunings that he felt he had something original to contribute to the genre. "I still have the little notebook of tunings that Maartin painstakingly wrote out for me in the early 80s when he was the instrumentalist in my wee band. When he left us to join Fairport Convention we all cried!"

His biggest lyrical influence back then was Tom Paxton, but, for pure acoustic sound, Ralph McTell's playing on *Spiral Staircase*, with his magic touch and the percussive ring that he conjured up from his Gibson J-50, really had the 'tingle factor'. Some years later Fraser bought a J-50 from Martin Simpson, who also taught him about plastic nails and superglue, but he could never get it to sound like Ralph's. "Not even close," he recalls, sadly.

Another big influence was Scottish folk legend, Archie Fisher. "He made a huge impression on me then and still does today. I first met him on the backstage stairs of the Dundee Rep Theatre when I was 19. He was carrying an old Gibson Kalamazoo, which he let me play before he went onstage to quieten, and then mesmerise, an over-refreshed, late night Dundonian audience… pure Gandalf. In those days I really wanted to be Archie McPaxton!"

After moving south, Fraser made a reasonable living playing the folk club scene in and around London until, quite suddenly in the late 1970s, a large number of clubs closed and he started getting cancellations.

"What I hadn't realised," he recalls, "was that 'folk' had been young people's music and, at 28, I was no longer a 'young' person. Tastes had changed and we were getting booted up the arse by the younger generation of punk, new wave and new romantic bands. Twas ever thus." However, around this time he did a gig at the folk club in the crypt of St Martin-in-the-Fields and, in the audience was Robert Earl, founder of Planet Hollywood, for whom he had organised a few corporate gigs. After the show he asked if Fraser would be interested in a more permanent

relationship and, partly because the money was irresistible, he agreed. Over the next few years he hired (and, on one occasion fired) some of Britain's finest folk performers – Maartin Allcock (Fairport Convention, Jethro Tull), Martin Bell (The Wonder Stuff) and Martin Simpson to name a few of many. It was steady work but, after several years of being tied to London, he felt that he needed a change and, having found a vibrant folk and acoustic guitar scene in Denmark, Germany and Holland, started touring there big time.

As the conversation moves back to performing, I ask him to elaborate on the playing techniques he has developed over the years.

"When I started, I could fingerpick with one finger and the thumb quite quickly. It took a few years to move on to two fingers and even longer to involve the third finger. I now pick with all four fingers and the thumb. The heel of my right hand rests on the bridge and I use a thumb pick and plastic nails secured by industrial strength superglue.

"Using your whole hand means you can be as sparse or as fancy as you feel you should be. You can also 'roll', which is creating a continuous stream of notes, within a series of chord shapes that follow the melody of the song. This can sound very effective and dynamic – particularly in DADGAD.

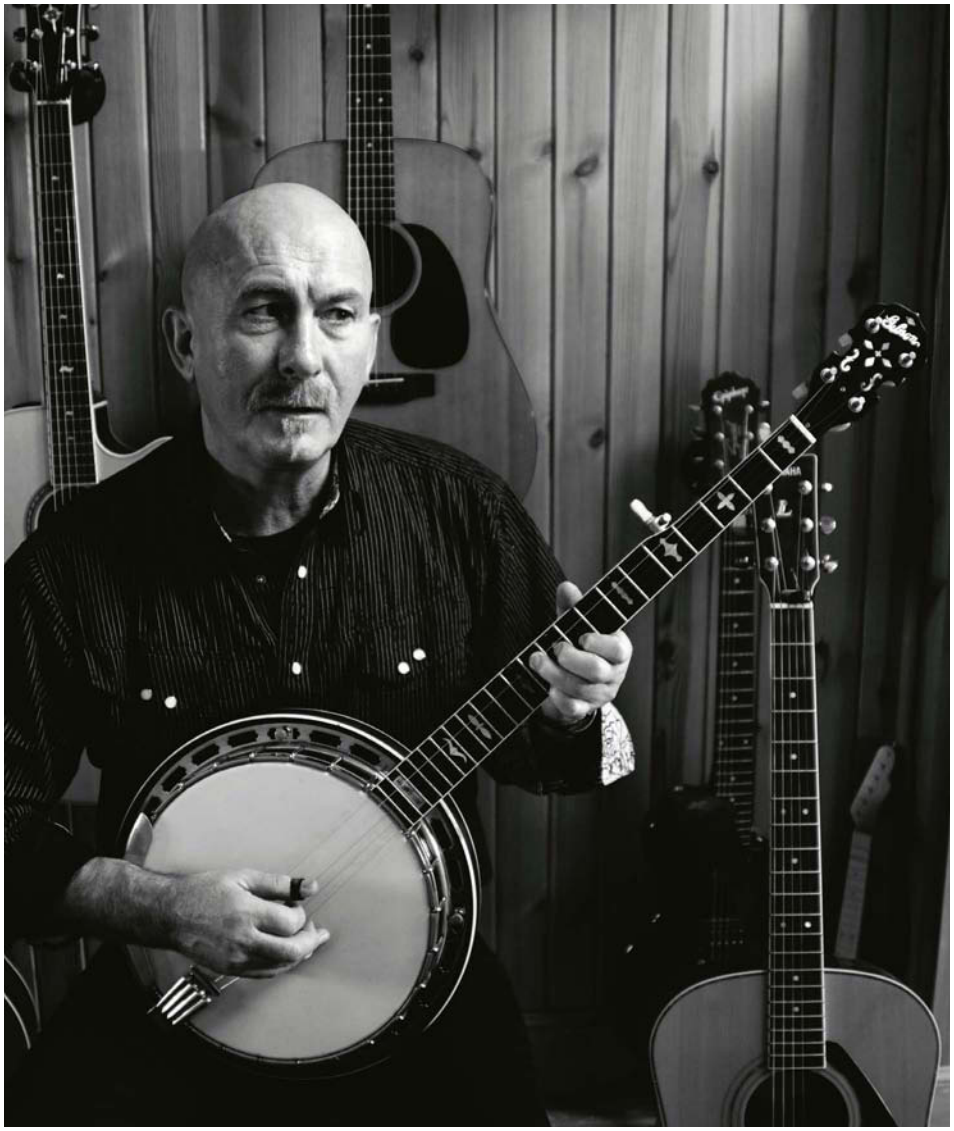
"My banjo style is totally hybrid – part bluegrass roll, two fingers and thumb with the third finger resting on the vellum for support – and part a kind of 'frailling', brushing my nails across the strings and picking out a bass-line with my thumb pick. I often make the purists frown by using both styles in one song – Appalachia and Kentucky in the same tune is considered to be banjo blasphemy!

"For live work I play a pair of oldish Martin D-18s (1971 and 1978) and use standard, DADGAD, open G and dropped D tunings. Both Martins have active 'Headway' pickups by John Littler – a fine English gizmo maker. They run through a four-into-one mini mixer and onwards to an original Fishman Aura editable pedal."

Fraser heard James Taylor using this equipment live, when it first appeared, and he could not believe that Taylor could achieve such a fine acoustic tone and clarity with no microphone, and therefore no feedback. That was all the recommendation he needed, so he went and got one.

"It takes a bit of getting into, but gives me what I have spent my whole professional life trying to achieve – a pure, unadulterated, acoustic sound which can be as large as it needs to be without the monitor howling – the bane of an acoustic guitarist's stage life."

In addition, for solo gigs, he runs everything into a Yamaha Stagepass PA system, which he finds is punchy, clear and much more powerful than its size would suggest.



"I also use a 1974 Gibson Mastertone Banjo with a Shadow bridge pickup. I bought this from Gruhn's famous music store in Nashville after a three-day haggle ended with an exhausted salesman surrendering, a handshake – and then it was mine!"

For festivals, where there is often little time for sound checks, his set-up is simpler. He generally uses his Yamaha Compass CPX8 acoustic. This model has a built-in EQ and volume, undersaddle pickup and an internal condenser mic that gets mixed in. When used with a rubber soundhole plug, to minimise feedback, he finds it a very versatile instrument.

For writing he uses the 1956 Martin 00-18 that he swapped, in 1972, for his Yamaha FG340. "The best deal of my life – easily my most treasured possession. Mind you, the Yamaha had a nice case! It is quite the sweetest tool in my box."

After the loss of his wife it took Fraser a few years to find his feet but, since 2011, he has been gigging again on a regular basis, playing clubs and festivals all over the UK. In 2012 he returned to Denmark for a short tour and has been playing gigs from Gravesend to Ullapool since then. In 2015 he had sell out shows at both Celtic Connections in Glasgow and the Edinburgh Festival, played the New Forest, Weymouth and Cromer Festivals and did a first tour of Australia.

As the last of the Glenturret evaporates I ask him what he has planned for the rest of 2016. "I'll be playing at the festival in Edinburgh again in August. This summer I'll be doing some Scottish highland village halls, as well as the usual round of folk clubs and, in November, I'm taking part in The Carrying Stream Festival, also in Edinburgh, for the first time."

Fraser is currently working on his next CD, his seventh, and every Wednesday night, when he's not on tour, he can be found at the 'session' that he co-hosts, with local musician Roy Henderson, at the Bankfoot Inn. I can vouch for the warm welcome extended to players, singers and listeners – that Fraser himself certainly plays a part in. ■

Fraser Nimmo's latest CD, *Best of Five and a Wee Bit Live*, is available at all good retailers or direct from **www.frasernimmo.co.uk**

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Acoustic Magazine, May 2016

FRAN HEALY

Twenty-six years on from their first recording, Travis have taken up where they left off. Frontman Fran Healy chats with Emily Bielby about the upcoming album Everything At Once, his love for vintage acoustics and why he hates mobile phones

WORDS: EMILY BIELBY **IMAGES PROVIDED BY:** MBC PR

One of the biggest brit-pop/melodic-rock bands from the 90s, Travis sprung to fame when they headlined Glastonbury following the success of their second album, *The Man Who*, which went on to be the biggest selling album of 1999. The album contained signature songs such as 'Why Does It Always Rain On Me?', 'Driftwood' and 'Turn', and ultimately kicked-off a career that's led to six more acclaimed albums, with their eighth released on 29 April .

"I managed to snag the best writing room I've ever had, which was in the Hansa Tonstudio in Berlin, and that was great because for the first time ever I had a room where nobody could hear me, nobody could hear any noise I was making and for me this was massively important," says Fran. "I began writing, and the inspiration, I guess, as it always is, was me wanting to find melodies that I've not heard before. When we have enough of those we'll go and record an album. I think the album is probably the most positive, 'weeping out of the speakers' record we've made, and it perhaps reflects the moment we're in. Everything is happening at once; there's so much stuff, there's so much media and there's so much that you're bombarded by. You can't walk along the street without your pocket vibrating or, in some cases, your wrist vibrating to alert you to some new development. There's a song called 'Paralyzed' where I'm having a subtle dig at myself and also just at this idea of being glued to these little screens. Everyone's glued to their glowing window."

Though Fran wields a 1973 Martin 12-string, which he picked up in Los Angeles, and a Guild JF65 12-string, which is the guitar used on the song 'Sing', you could be forgiven for thinking that guitar brands are important to him. But they're not. Fran reflects back to a memory he had of his first visit to New York.

"I made the pilgrimage to Mandolin Brothers and the man in the shop got a real kick out of watching me go around and with almost every single acoustic guitar just ping a couple of strings on each one as it hung on the stand. They have about 1,000 guitars and I must have twanged almost every single one over a four-hour period and then eventually found this really nice Santa Cruz. I don't really care what make it is, I just care about the personality and tone of it."

Fran has found guitars that he loves in Guild and Martin, but it is with a Japanese label he has had the most success. "Guilds are the guitars I use live and I think they're really beautifully made for modern guitars. They're great for gigs because they're robust and they're good on sound. I have three Guilds that I use: the Guild JF65 12-string and two six-string D50 Bluegrass Specials. I also play a 12-string Taylor W65 as well, which is the second 12-string I use," he pauses. "I think live, acoustic guitars have a habit of sounding a little bit twangy or they don't really sound acoustic. I also have a 1942 Martin, which is a really beautiful sounding guitar, but the

weird thing is, the guitar that I've had the most success writing with was a guitar that I traded my CD player for in Glasgow 25 years ago. It's a Japanese guitar called a Kimbara; it's just a really bog-standard, off-the-shelf Japanese guitar, but the tone somehow works really well with my voice." That blend of tone and vocal synergy is also something that Fran considers in his strings. "I prefer my acoustics to sound worn-in, not muddy. When they're muddy I change the strings, I like them just in the middle; not too shiny and not too dull."

The Guilds are modern guitars, but it's obvious Fran has a keen eye for older guitars, and not just in keeping with the worn-in touch on his strings. "I like this feeling of knowing that it's a well-loved thing," he clarifies. "I do like the idea of going into vintage shops, buying a guitar and actually taking it on the road and using it, instead of letting it sit in a room like many people do. These guitars are only valuable because they're rare, but really they're built to be played, if you could see some of the things I've done with my Fender; I've like thrown it across the stage at my guitar tech to catch, although I don't do that anymore, I've grown up a bit."

You could say Fran's love affair with the acoustic guitar began early, with the first guitar he bought being from a catalogue after seeing Roy Orbison play on *The Last Resort* with Jonathan Ross when he was just 13 years old. "I changed my present for Christmas and asked my mum if I could get an acoustic guitar instead. I didn't know how to tune it, so I tuned it all to a chord," he confesses. "The action on this guitar was insane, it was like 8mm off the neck and that should have put me off playing guitar, but it didn't. The first song that I learned to play was 'Three Steps To Heaven' by Eddie Cochran. I had a rock'n'roll tape that I borrowed from my friend. It had Chuck Berry and all these old guys on it. I tuned my guitar to a chord which was essentially an open tuning, but I didn't realise that's what I was doing. That's what got me going and really pushed me into music. Songwriting happened because I didn't really have any references for any bands that I followed; I just loved the sound of guitars so, instead of playing covers, I would just try and write songs. I would do guitar solos with my mouth and I thought, 'When I get a proper guitar, I'm going to be shredding the shit out of it,' but it wasn't to be. I'm still a strummer and the interesting thing is the guitar solo thing I did with my mouth came in handy because that's where songs start now."

It's clear that the guitar is, and always will be, a prominent instrument in Travis' music, but that hasn't stopped Fran going on to learn the piano, banjo and harmonica… well, sort of. "I don't really play them, I can't tell you what I'm doing. I can sort of play the banjo, but if you were to ask, 'What's that string called?', I wouldn't be able to tell you – unless it was a G string because that's the one I know!

"I've always said this was a deliberate thing for me because I didn't really want to know anything about the theory of music. I think if you have a map you're going to just end up going down all of the avenues that are on that map, but if you don't have one you're much more likely to stumble upon things that other people haven't, and by that I mean melodies and things that just pop." He adds: "If you've ever sat down and got lucky enough to write a song that's got this special quality, you get this weird feeling in your tummy, it's a nice feeling to have and you get addicted to it, whether it's hormones or adrenaline, you then spend the rest of your life trying to get that again. That's possibly why I'm still trying to find those little passages of melody that do this – that's what motivates me." ■

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TAYLOR 514CE

Taylor's 562 12-string recently won 'Acoustic Guitar of the Year' at the International Press Awards. Alun Lower asks if their recently overhauled 514ce is also poised for widespread acclaim

WORDS: ALUN LOWER **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

When you've spent years reviewing guitars of all shapes and sizes, from the traditional to the bafflingly unconventional, it's easy to get to the point where talking about the annual updates on some guitars can be a bit of a challenge. A new neck profile here, additional finishing options there. But with some guitar companies even the subtlest and most seemingly innocuous of changes can be a big talking point – and generally, the bigger the brand, the bigger the debate. In acoustic guitar circles Taylor certainly inspires a devoted following, and the 500 series is rightly coveted amongst six-stringers, with the 514ce an established favourite for singer-songwriters looking for a versatile strummer to fuel their creativity.

So the question is, has Taylor done anything radical with the redesigned 500 Series, or are we essentially reviewing a redesigned soundhole rosette and little else? Well, there are a few cosmetic refinements – but it turns out that the big story with the series' reboot is actually on the inside, with the series now boasting an improved bracing design. Let's shine a light and take a look.

If you're not familiar with the 514ce, the first thing you should know is that Taylor itself has designed the guitar to appeal to singer-songwriters in particular. It's something of an everyman, with an accessible, clean design that lends itself primarily for 'light to medium' strummers, according to Taylor. It's a modern take on a classic design in many ways, with Taylor itself describing the original 514 as 'neo-vintage' in its appointments. This newer version, aesthetically, certainly expands and refines this approach. The core tonewoods are the same, with a western red cedar top and tropical mahogany back and sides providing the base for the 514ce's tonal palette. As before, the neck is mahogany topped with an ebony fingerboard complete with 20 well-polished and fitted frets. The

"The decorations give the 514ce a sophisticated, sharp and modern look with just a little hint of retro"

decorations are where the most obvious changes have occurred – where the original 514 featured an abundance of faux-ivoroid binding, the new version leaves the neck and headstock unbound and opts for a darker faux-tortoiseshell around the body and soundhole. Normally I wouldn't be much of a fan of tortoiseshell (faux or otherwise), but in this case I have to say it works well, largely, I suspect, because it blends in quite nicely with the mahogany and cedar combo. It all adds up to give the 514ce a sophisticated, sharp and modern look with just a little hint of retro – a nice balance from Taylor.

Cosmetics aside, the biggest changes in the new 500 series are actually found underneath the hood, with a brand new 'Performance' bracing pattern replacing the old 'Forward Shifted' design. Based on the classic 'X-brace' design used so commonly throughout the industry, the new Performance pattern is designed as a template that can be applied to the entire 500 series, but still allow for smaller modifications to tailor (no pun intended) the set-up for the particular dimensions and style of each guitar. The end result, in theory, is a voicing that brings out the best in the mahogany/cedar combo and all the wonderful tonal qualities that entails.

Of course, were we just looking at the 514 our analysis of the build would be near complete by now, but the little 'ce' at the end of the model number means that you also get the award-winning and proprietary Expression System 2 thrown into the mix. The company's behind-the-saddle system has been delivering quality results across Taylor's line for some time now, and it's always a pleasure to see this unit in place whether it's on the GS Mini or on the core instruments.

Unfortunately, without having an example of the older 514 to hand, it's a little tricky to definitively tell you whether this new 2016 version is a substantial improvement in tone. So rather than this section turning into an A/B comparison, we're just going to look at the new 514ce on its own merits. Now, as we've established earlier, Taylor pitch the 514ce very much as the ideal guitar for a singer-songwriter. This turns out to be a very good assessment, but it could use some explanation.

"The cedar and mahogany combo mixes beautifully to create a soft, warm and almost 'blooming' tone"

TAYLOR 514CE

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Taylor Guitars
Model: 514ce Grand Auditorium
RRP: £2,485
Made In: El Cajon, California
Top: Western red cedar
Back and Sides: Tropical mahogany
Bridge: Ebony
Neck: Tropical mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 20
Tuners: Taylor Nickel
Nut Width: 1 3/4"
Scale Length: 25 1/2"
Onboard Electrics: Taylor Expression System 2 Electronics
Strings Fitted: Elixir Strings Phosphor Bronze HD Light
Gig Bag/Case Included: Taylor Deluxe Hardshell Case in Brown

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: An intoxicating blend of tones, fine-tuned for vocalists
Cons: Possibly a tad expensive, and perhaps not for everyone
Overall: Any singer-songwriter with a healthy budget and a love of warmer tones needs to arrange a test-drive soon

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪☆
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪☆
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

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Played primarily with a plectrum, the cedar and mahogany combo of the 514ce mixes beautifully to create a soft, warm and almost 'blooming' tone. It swells, rises and falls beautifully as you vary your attack, with a sweet mid-range dominance backed up by a more subtle, but still satisfying low-end and a softly-voiced and rounded treble. It's worth noting though that the guitar is designed more for a 'light to medium' strum, so bashing away at this thing, Kurt Cobain style, ain't the way to go.

At the extremes the tone is still usable but perhaps just a little flabby, and really it's just not designed to live here. If your preferred approach is to really thrash the strings then a spruce-topped guitar will be more your thing.

This is one of the main reasons that we'd really agree with Taylor's singer-songwriter label, as playing with this more considered approach yields an atmospheric, dynamic tone with plenty of richness – but crucially, it leaves enough room in the 'mix' for vocals. It's easy to be overpowered by a brighter instrument, but the 514ce has no such desire, happy to work away as the perfect wingman. That's not to say that there isn't any projection or volume – those are available in abundance. Think of it more as an EQ adjustment than anything else.

Fingerstyle players might not find the 514ce to be perfectly set up to their needs, but those that like to put down their pick from time to time will find plenty to like with the tones on offer

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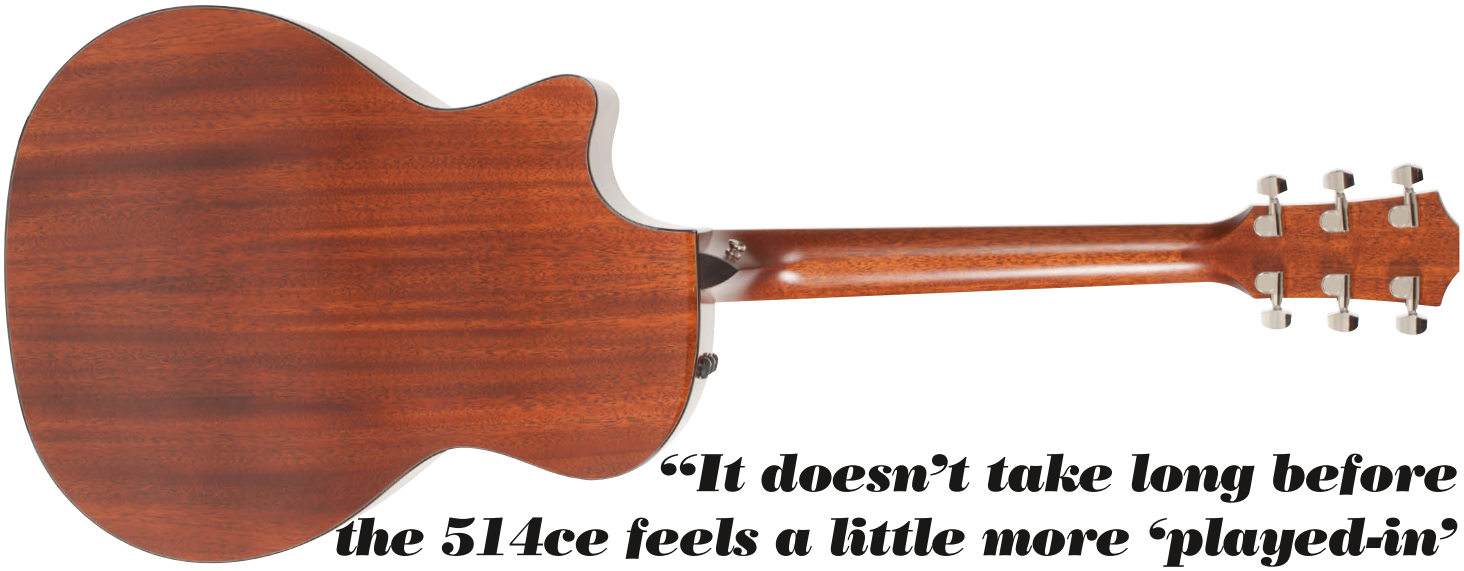
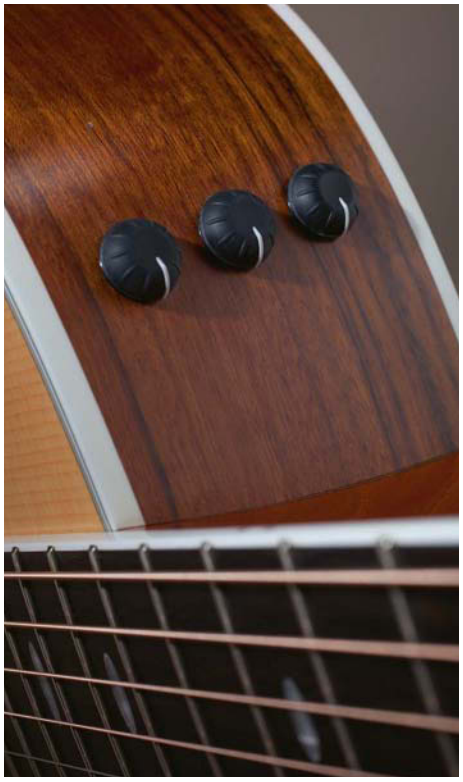


"It doesn't take long before the 514ce feels a little more 'played-in' than its spruce-topped contemporaries"



here. Brushing the strings with the back of your nails adds a punchy weight to the overall sound, while using the fleshy side mellows things out that little bit further, and is really quite lovely for those sombre, quiet moments where you just want to hear the notes ring out for days on end.

Thanks to those inherent warmer tones, it doesn't take long before the 514ce feels a little more 'played-in' than its spruce-topped contemporaries, so we really would love to hear what one sounds like after a few months of regular play. As it stands, this is a guitar that sounds mature and accomplished from the get-go, and that's a really great quality to boast.

The plugged-in tones are certainly up there with the Taylor standard, thanks to the reliability of the Expression 2 system. More advanced units would obviously offer electro diehards a more flexible tone out of the box, but this is a fantastic and easy-to-use platform that avoids much of the 'quackiness' of piezo pickups. Combined with an EQ and a few pedals there is an awful lot of tonal ground that can be covered, giving those that want a plug and play simplicity to their live performances plenty to smile about.

Taylor is one of those companies that achieves remarkable consistency across its instruments, making them awfully hard to criticise for us reviewers. Truthfully we're not sure whether the 514ce is a night-and-day difference from the original model, but the bottom line is that this is an exceptionally playable guitar with a beautifully soft, warm and expressive voice. Singer-songwriters will love the 514ce for the way it blends into their vocals, but those of us with a whole pond full of frogs in our throats can still get in on the fun, for sure.

If I was to pick out any particular criticism I could only really point to the price – unless this guitar is 100 per cent perfectly tuned to your needs then there is a chance that this is a tad overpriced. But you're going to get that with many American guitars, and if ever there's been a company that has a guitar for everyone, it's Taylor. If any of the tones I've mentioned sound in the least bit appealing then I'd say you'd be doing yourself a massive disservice not to check this guitar out. ■

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GAFFNEY MODIFIED DREADNOUGHT

Julian Gaffney is currently completing his apprenticeship with Ervin Somogyi in Oakland, California. Stephen Bennett runs the rule over a modified dreadnought from this talented young luthier

WORDS: STEPHEN BENNETT **IMAGES:** WILL BREMRIDGE

The words "Sorcerer's Apprentice" will no doubt have you, cultured reader, slicing the air with your imaginary baton to the plunging cadences of Paul Dukas's familiar *fin-de-siècle* Parisian chart-topper. The rest of us will be content to slip back into kid-hood with the calamitous, cartoon cock-ups of a hubristic mop-wielding mouse. Either way, no true sorcerer can get by without an apprentice, and Ervin Somogyi (the guitar-world equivalent of Gandalf, Yoda and Merlin combined) has had quite a few over the years, and not surprisingly all have been talented – some astonishingly so.

Somogyi's incredibly selective about the people he takes on. He needs acolytes equipped to scale the pinnacle of their craft – and stay there – once they've reshaped a small part of themselves in much the same way as they've had to hand-whittle a perfect three-inch cube from a random chunk of mahogany. Sounds easy? If it's not spot-on, you don't get in. And very few get in.

As this review goes to press, Julian Gaffney will have served his time. He's announced his arrival with a guitar built in the boss's workshop – the traditional culmination of the apprentices' course-work – that sets the bar, straight from the off, at somewhere close to the 'stratospheric' mark.

This Modified Dreadnought, naturally enough, bears the classic hallmarks of the Somogyi design aesthetic, but Gaffney's looking to evolve and develop both the look and sound under the banner of his own personality and vision. To this end, he's gone with back and sides in a striking, spectacular-grained cocobolo that creates the visual illusion of deep striations, from Stygian black to an almost back-lit, crystalline amber. The bearclaw Sitka spruce top, meanwhile, appears to shimmer and shift like a distant breeze-blown cornfield. Gaffney's matched them up here to deliver his own tonal

"vorsprung" variation, which he describes as "power plus balance".

Despite the hybrid cubist/Japanese fusion in the design references elsewhere, the segmented rosette – a mini-masterclass in mitring and marquetry – recalls the austere, English restraint of Eric Gill's black and white wood-cuts, with patterning so subtly detailed it can only be fully appreciated up close, where the merest hints of a delicate green colouring begin to emerge. The beautifully worked headstock veneer features an elegant inlaid 'tile' in a similar vein (echoed in the fretboard position markers) and the V-shaped notch that's become something of a West Coast feature via the instruments of Jeff Traugott and Michi Matsuda. Indeed, the pagoda-roof curves of the ebony bridge reflect a Japanese aesthetic that Gaffney freely attributes to Matsuda's influence. And while the Spanish-style, "slipper" heel may well be reminiscent of Jason Kostal's work, Gaffney's insistence on giving the whole concept his own signature spin is as refreshing as it is bold, especially when you take into account his acknowledged 'up and coming' status.

Beneath the icing, all the not-so-standard Mod Dread 'cake' features are firmly in place; from the big chunky, white-bone saddle to the creamier-coloured, scalloped bone nut (that Somogyi stamp again), the sturdy handful of graphite-reinforced, mahogany neck that flows smoothly upwards to a voluted headstock back-plate in ultra-lush, quilted sapele and those must-have, gold Gotoh 510s complete with ebony 'mini' buttons.

The gold detailing seems odd at first; until you start to join the aesthetic dots between the rich cream of the finely wrought fretboard coach-lining, the jade striping in the marquetry and the pale yellow glow of that French-polished, bearclaw top.

And so to the sound. As affirmed on many occasions within these pages, there's no discernible loss of dreadnought-related volume via the Mod D's shallow, Florentine cutaway. The fact that there's not a great deal of vibration (good or otherwise) going on above the upper transverse bracing allows for a massive and tonally glorious sweet-spot. The requisite volume's there, if and when required, but this one's parade-ground, Stentorian boom is balanced by a sustain that simply refuses to lie down and disappear. With strummed chords, it doesn't just bark, it almost sits up and begs. The vault of Cologne Cathedral probably has similar headroom.

Though cocobolo is, admittedly, yet another member of the rosewood family, it got most of the looks and a big share of the voice. It's noted for a deeply sonorous resonance – hence the increased cost – that delivers extra sustain and even what seems like a magical touch of reverb. As such, it's ideal for bigger-bodied guitars and here, that reverb-vibe takes the Gaffney's huge tonal and dynamic range onto a higher plane altogether. There's a sense of an almost microphonic feedback from the complex overtones generated then

GAFFNEY MODIFIED DREADNOUGHT

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Gaffney
Model: Modified D
RRP: £7,750
Body Size: Modified Dreadnought
Made In: California, USA
Top: Bearclaw Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Cocobolo
Bindings: Cocobolo
Bridge: Ebony
Saddle: Bone
Neck: Graphite reinforced Honduran mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 21
Strings: Elixir PB 12-53
Tuners: Gotoh 510
Nut Width: 1.75"
Scale Length: 25.25"
Onboard Electrics: None
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hoffee carbon fibre

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Flawless build standards, incredible tone, bomb-proof case
Cons: Still looking
Overall: A truly remarkable instrument that takes all the best from its various influences and moves them on to the next level

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.thenorthamericanguitar.com

launched from that big cocobolo bowl. Think of the extra 'lift' and fullness a vocalist gets from an SM58 as opposed to a 57 and you'll get the idea. Also, having switched around between the Gaffney and guitars with similar bodies and woods, this one not only trounces the opposition but makes the price look like a steal. Especially with an indestructible Hoffee case thrown in.

One thing about Mod Ds is that they're almost invariably made to be played sitting down. That way, there's space for air to move between the player's body and the back of the instrument – unlike with a bluegrass dread that excels when the player's standing and back is locked, vibration-wise, against the torso. This inevitably implies a more 'Windham Hill' (from whence the Mod D notion was conceived) than a 'powerhouse' sensibility. As their recording careers developed, Alex de Grassi, Will Ackerman et al were struggling to get the sound in their heads out of the instruments in their hands; a new blueprint was needed and essentially, this is the latest realisation thereof. The Gaffney isn't just a New Age guitar – far from it – though in DADGAD it certainly assumes an extra mantle of stately, Celtic dignity atop the already evident piano-note separation and clarity; helped, in perfect 'form-meets-function' mode, by the instrument's slightly up-shifted waist (for added comfort as well as tone) and a wider fingerboard, clearly geared towards a finger-style approach.

Julian Gaffney's young-tyro working manifesto is all about building consistently world-class instruments that will one day have the old masters looking over their shoulders. It's already happening. The sound he's after is informed by that of the finest Somogyi instruments. He describes it as eerie, haunting and something that "once you've heard, you can't un-hear".

And while that might sound a bit Gothic, a few well-chosen major-sevenths on this beautiful instrument will soon transport you into the happier, higher realms of the sublime. ■

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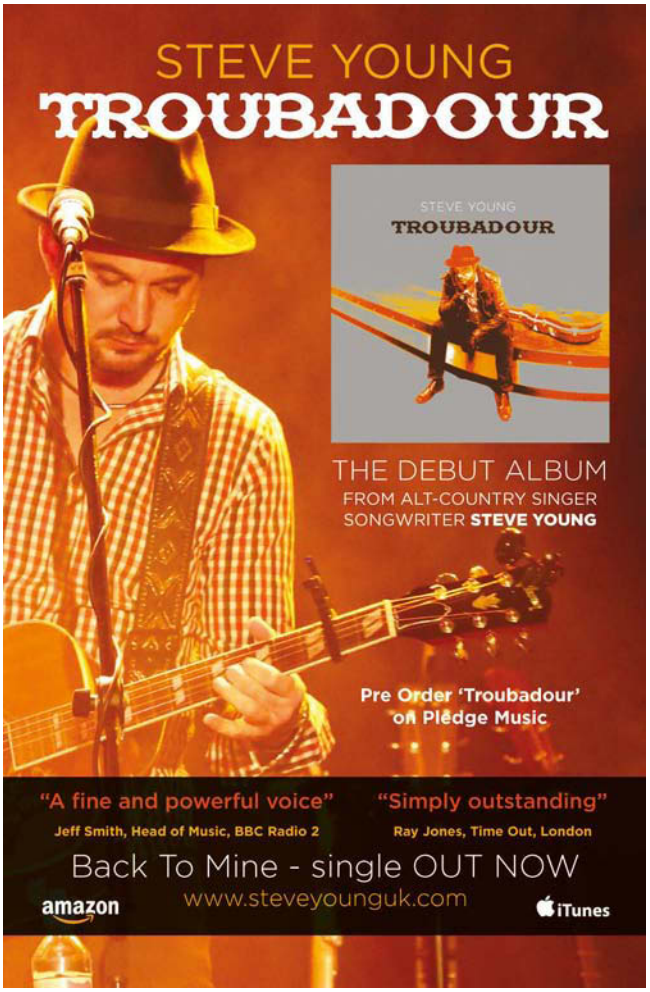


PILGRIM MORNING STAR VPB1005 & VPB100RE

Under the umbrella of one of the UK's largest distributors, Pilgrim Banjos has launched a range of new models. Banjo-guru Leon Hunt dons the thumb picks

WORDS: LEON HUNT **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

In this review we'll be focusing on two of the new range of Morning Star banjos from Pilgrim, the VPB1005 and the VPB100RE, but, before I put some picks on and start scrutinising the instruments, we should take a quick look at the company behind them, and in particular Pilgrim's founder Paul Tebbutt.

At first glance, one could be excused for thinking of Pilgrim as just another brand dreamt up in the boardroom. Sometimes brand names are plucked out of thin air and plonked on the top of mass-produced instruments, commissioned and thrown together somewhere in Asia.

The distribution company that has brought the Pilgrim brand to the masses is JHS (John Hornby Skewes), but with these Morning Star banjos, there's a backstory that sets them apart.

Paul Tebbutt, the founder of Pilgrim, had already built a solid reputation for his company before JHS got involved. And, most pertinently, Paul Tebbutt is still very much at the helm ensuring that Pilgrim's hard-earned reputation remains.

Tebbutt started out playing guitar and banjo in the folk clubs of the 1960s and his interest in music soon led him to repairing, setting up, and selling stringed instruments. As his business evolved he began commissioning luthiers from around the UK to make guitars, mandolins and banjos for his newly founded Pilgrim brand. Tebbutt must have been doing something right because when JHS were searching for expertise and an established trademark for the 'folk instruments' side of their business, Tebbutt and his Pilgrim designs were apparently exactly what the company was looking for.

"These Morning Star banjos project real handmade aesthetics, belying their mass-produced origins"

Having recently spoken to Paul on the subject, I got the impression that in certain factories in China, he's become something of a hard-to-please 'man from Del Monte' type figure. He now spends much of his time pushing ever harder for better quality components and materials to be used, and for his designs to be adhered to accurately.

The Morning Star name refers primarily to Tebbutt's own take on Vega's classic three-piece Tubaphone tone ring. The tone ring is the all-important, tone-defining component that the head (or skin) of the banjo is stretched across. His quest for the ultimate Tubaphone started way back in the late 1970s when he approached a bell foundry in Leicester to make a batch of components for him. In recent years, the evolution of his Morning Star tone ring has continued in Asia. Tebbutt now feels he has exactly what he's been looking for, and the fruits of his endeavours are fitted to all of the banjos here.

There are three five-string banjos in the Morning Star range: the VPB1005, an open backed 'old time' banjo; the VPB100LN, a long neck 'Seeger style' instrument; and the VPB100RE, a resonator 'bluegrass banjo'. There is also the VPB1004, a four stringed 'Irish style' tenor banjo. We'll be focusing on the VPB1005 and VPB100RE here.

As I've already talked about Pilgrim's Morning Star tone ring, it seems appropriate for me to continue on this tack and explore the sound these instruments produce. It's actually fairly unusual to find this kind of three-piece Tubaphone arrangement on a modern mass-produced banjo. Most instruments (that are of sufficient quality to have a tone ring at all) sport the more common one-piece Mastertone style parts

PILGRIM MORNING STAR VPB1005

NEED TO KNOW

Model: VPB1005
RRP: £929
Skin: Frosted Remo Weather King
Shell: Solid maple, flamed maple with ebony cap
Neck: Flamed maple with ebony cap
Fingerboard: Ebony with star inlays
Frets: 21
Tuners: Enclosed with geared fifth string peg
Nut Material/Width: Bone 31.4mm
Scale Length: 670mm
Left handers: No
Gig Bag/Case Included: Comes with hard case

PILGRIM MORNING STAR VPB100RE

NEED TO KNOW

Model: VPB100RE
Retail Price: £979
Skin: Frosted Remo Weather King
Shell and neck: Solid maple, flamed maple, faced ebony cap
Fingerboard: Ebony with star inlays
Frets: 21
Tuners: Enclosed, geared fifth string peg
Nut Material/Width: Bone 31.4mm
Scale Length: 670mm
Left handers: No
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hard Case included

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Generally good build quality. Excellent playability. Refreshingly different tonal qualities
Cons: Possibly a tad expensive
Overall: These instruments are designed and set-up by people who know and care how banjos should play and sound. That in itself might be worth paying a slight premium for

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪✩
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✩
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✩✩
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

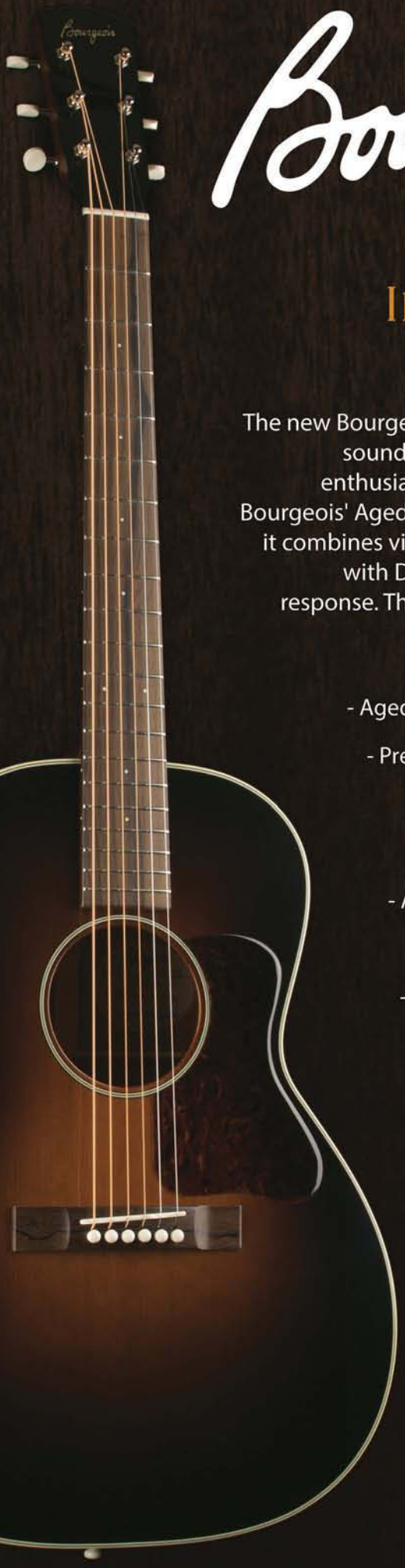
www.jhs.co.uk/pilgrimbanjos

"All the banjos in the range are pleasing and easy to play. The well thought-out neck profiles make you feel at home at once"

pioneered by Gibson in the early 1900s. Playing these banjos proves a long held theory of mine that this is as much to do with convention and economics, as sound.

These banjos have a really pleasing 'plummy' quality to them; a full rounded bass end, colourful midrange, but seemingly lacking little in top end definition, clarity and sustain. You can really hear the difference the Morning Star tone ring is making. For this reason, if you're fixated on the sound of a traditional 'Scruggs style' banjo, one of these might not be quite what you're looking for. Unfortunately, the resonator 'bluegrass style' banjo had suffered the usual misconceptions on the part of the person who set it up. The head was tightened to within an inch of its life and the tailpiece was cranked down as low as it could possibly go. These adjustments, irrespective of the build quality and components used, will always deliver teeth-rattling levels of twang and 'divorce-inducing' offensiveness. However, with just a few minutes of tweaking, I'm fully confident that the VPB100RE will make a more than capable 'bluegrass style' banjo.

All the banjos in range are pleasing and easy to play. The neck profiles are well thought out, making you feel at home almost at once. It's difficult to pinpoint the qualities that constitute a comfortable banjo neck, especially when there's nothing extraordinary about the designs. However, the frequency with which banjo players are subjected to far less comfortable instruments, especially from Asia, makes this worthy of a mention.



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The satin finish and well-dressed frets add yet further to the comfort and playability of these banjos. Moving up and down the fingerboard on these Pilgrim instruments is a pleasurable, smooth experience. I did discover a couple of buzzes on the open backed banjo, but probably nothing that some judicious tweaking and tweezing wouldn't easily cure.

These banjos project real handmade aesthetics, belying their mass-produced origins. This must be down to Tebbutt's designs and frequent communications and demands on the factory. His subsequent attention to quality control as the instruments arrive in the country must also play a big part in how these banjos are finally presented.

The simple, but nonetheless attractive star inlays on the fingerboard and peghead are yet another nod to the classic Vega banjos of the 20s. Unfortunately they suffer the usual amount of filler in order to make up for the cutting inaccuracies that seem to plague most modern factory instruments. However, these inlays are unusually of very colourful abalone instead of the conventional mother of pearl (or even plastic in some cases). This, combined with the satin blonde maple finish and the petite Vega-inspired peghead really sets these banjos apart from the legions of Mastertone-alikes in the marketplace today.

"Moving up and down the fingerboard on these instruments is a pleasurable, smooth experience"

I felt that the tuners were slightly less responsive than I'd have liked, but this may be more to do with the strings binding slightly in the nut and/or the bridge than the mechanisms themselves. Again, this is something that might well be cured with a little fettling and fine-tuning.

All in all these Morning Star banjos from Pilgrim offer a decent alternative to the numerous Mastertone style banjos that are currently on sale, at what I would describe as the upper end of the budget market.

It's refreshing to play such well-conceived and carefully put together instruments. Personally, I would have liked to have seen better quality bridges used but, that said, bridges are a fairly personal thing and something many banjo players may experiment with anyway. Also worth mentioning are the good quality hardshell cases all four models now ship with. This is of even greater importance to people considering the long necked model, where finding a third-party case to fit could prove to be an issue. ■

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FRAMUS FP14 PARLOUR & FJ14 JUMBO

Framus used the NAMM show at the start of the year to launch an expansion of its range of acoustic guitars, including new parlour and jumbo models. Sam Wise spends some time with this 'little and large' duo

WORDS: SAM WISE **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

From 1946 to 1977, German company Framus made good quality guitars at competitive prices. Perhaps the most notable among its customers was a young Paul McCartney. As punk rock dawned, Framus went out of business, but in 1995, the brand was revived as part of the Warwick Music Group, helmed by Hans-Peter Wilfer, son of founder Fred Wilfer, and once more produced acoustic and electric guitars and amps. Do they represent the same great value they did in the early 60s? Well, having the guitars manufactured in Asia keeps the prices reasonable, and this pair of solid top instruments, a spruce jumbo at £552, and a mahogany parlour at £390, makes for an interesting comparison.

These guitars, sat next to each other, make quite a contrast; the long narrow body of the 12-fret to body parlour accentuating the chubby form of the 14-fret jumbo. Both are good lookers though. The parlour's solid mahogany top is rich and beautiful, honestly more so than several more expensive mahogany instruments we've tested in recent months. The rosette is a simple pair of concentric rings, the outer abalone and the inner what appears to be dark mahogany, and the abalone stands out wonderfully against the dark top. The back and sides are mahogany veneer on laminate, which is missing the richness of the top, while a simple cream binding adds elegance. The moustache-like rosewood bridge has a fully compensated bone nut and ebony bridge pins with mother of pearl inlay dots for a touch of class. The 18-fret mahogany neck has a rosewood fingerboard, bound in cream, with simple mother of pearl dot markers, and at the north end, there's a bone nut, further evidence of a real focus on quality, and the slotted headstock with its three-on-a-plate tuners adds a bit of vintage flair. The shorter scale, the 12th fret body joint and the deep set bridge conspire to make this quite a compact guitar. This, though the cheaper of the two guitars by some distance, is equipped with a Fishman Isys+ pickup system, consisting of an undersaddle piezo, a head unit with a tuner, volume, bass and treble controls, a phase switch and a battery box in the lower bout near the endpin, with an integrated jack socket. The FP14 doesn't look overstated, but it stands out.

The jumbo is another looker, though in a different style. The top (and there's plenty of it!) is Sitka spruce; not the most finely or evenly grained that you'll ever see, but good enough for the money. The same mahogany and abalone rosette is there, looking markedly different against the pale wood, but no less impressive, and this time, the top is bound in tortoiseshell. The back and sides are veneered in wonderfully flamed and figured maple (and ironically, the sonic qualities of solid maple are not a million miles from decent laminate), which looks incredibly luxurious. The same moustache bridge, bone saddle and ebony bridge pins, this time contrasting emphatically with the spruce, adds an unmistakeable Framus flourish.

Here, the rosewood fingerboard is 21 frets, with a longer scale, on a maple neck, and without any binding. The headstock here is solid, faced with rosewood, which is stained so dark that it could easily be ebony, and inlaid with the same swooping Framus logo and a mother of pearl split diamond inlay. This simple, bold design is unexpectedly arresting, and is a real visual differentiator from other jumbos you might have seen. The jumbo on test doesn't come with a pick-up, but Framus offers a cutaway version – which has a different wood on the back and sides – that does.

FRAMUS FP14 PARLOUR

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Framus
Model: FP14
RRP: £390.61
Body Size: Parlour
Made In: China
Top: Solid mahogany
Back and Sides: Mahogany
Bridge: Indian rosewood
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Indian rosewood
Frets: 18
Tuners: Chrome, steel post style, ratio 15:1
Nut Width: 45mm
Scale Length: 628mm
Onboard Electrics: Fishman Isys+ Preamp with Sonicore pickup
Strings Fitted: Cleartone Acoustic EMP 012-053
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Lovely, classy looks, soft and intimate tone
Cons: A little boxy if you strum really hard
Overall: A really lovely guitar that wants to sing softly to you

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪☆
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪☆
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.warwick.de/en/Framus

It's an indication of how good both of these guitars are that they have been in constant use throughout the review period, and these have been given thorough workouts. The parlour is everything you would expect from such a small body: it's intimate and accommodating, and the 'C' section neck profile, while not remarkable, is fine. Top fret access is limited a little by the 12 fret join, but for most acoustic players, that's not a huge issue, and, as another writer once put it, "the money is all down at the other end anyway." Tonally, this guitar is absolutely at one end of the scale. Everything about it pushes in the same direction: shorter scales tend towards deeper, fatter tones, while mahogany tops soften the treble attack and add, to my ears, a chocolatey darkness to the mid-tones, in contrast to the warmth of the harmonics from cedar or redwood.

That tonal palette is exactly what you get from the FP14; it's dark and intimate, the trebles chiming pleasingly but softly, the mids dark and blossoming, and the bass relatively muted and warm, if a little boxy. For fingerstyle, it's a real treat, the tone spreads beautifully if you give it the space it needs between the notes.

Start to strum, and the relative lack of bass response makes itself known, but this is a quiet-voiced guitar all round, and it doesn't feel inappropriate. Dig in and work it hard, and the limitation of the body size shows itself. It's still pleasant to listen to, but thrash away with a plectrum and you'll notice the bottom end hitting a wall. To be fair though, that's not what this guitar is about. It's for delighting you on the sofa, balladeering to your close friends, and when you need to be loud, plugging in. Treat it like a little guitar, and don't expect it to sound like a big one, and it will make you happy. Plugged in, it's good if not stratospheric. As is often the case, the piezo emphasises the treble a little and adds some punch, but the tone retains its signature, and we would be quite happy using this on stage.

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** Model shown T300D

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FRAMUS FJ14 JUMBO

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Framus
Model: FJ14
RRP: £552.61
Body Size: Jumbo
Made In: China
Top: Solid A Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: AAA flamed maple
Bridge: Indian rosewood
Neck: Maple
Fingerboard: Indian rosewood
Frets: 21
Tuners: Chrome, closed, gear ratio 15:1
Nut Width: 45mm
Scale Length: 648mm
Onboard Electrics: None
Strings Fitted: Cleartone Acoustic 012-053
Gig Bag/Case Included: N/A

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Very pretty, with a pure and loud tone
Cons: We wish this version had a pickup
Overall: A fabulously punchy and classy looking guitar

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪☆
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪☆
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪☆
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.warwick.de/en/Framus

The jumbo is, in every way, a different kettle of haddock. Wider and deeper, it doesn't nestle into you the way the parlour does, but that's not to say it's a challenge, only that the contrast is noticeable. Where the parlour wants to lean towards you, turning up its fingerboard like a happy cat's belly, the jumbo, with its greater girth, tends to sit more upright and out-turned, making you look at the edge of the fingerboard instead. Tonally, it could not be more different; spruce and laminate is a bright combination, and its longer scale adds punch and chime, and again the jumbo answers true to form. Despite trying, we couldn't find a style we didn't enjoy playing on the jumbo. Compared to the cedar- or mahogany-topped big body alternatives, there is notably less warmth to the tone, but that is amply compensated for by the pure crystalline top end and powerful bass projection.

For fingerstyle, it's capable of being delicate and subtle, ringing and singing out at the top with a strong and direct underlying bass tone. Strumming is again rewarded with a powerful and punchy tone, loud and upfront. Pick up a plectrum and it really demands your attention. We were working on a bluegrass tune during the review period, and the FJ14 excelled when flatpicking; the clarity and note definition left my other guitars in the dust, and if I could afford to keep it, I would, even though the lack of a pickup would be a challenge.

For £400, you're getting into all-solid territory, and at the jumbo's price point, there is plenty of all solid competition, but I would challenge you to find an all-solid for this sort of money which sounded better. My musical partner is desperately trying to scrape together the money to buy one. It's hard to imagine a stronger recommendation for the parlour than that, and the jumbo won a place in my heart too. You will not be choosing between these two; they are different beasts for different purposes, but if you're looking for an intimate fingerpicker, or a bold, brash flatpicker, then unless your budget extends to a hand-built boutique guitar, you should try these before you make your decision. I think many of you may end up buying one if you do. ■

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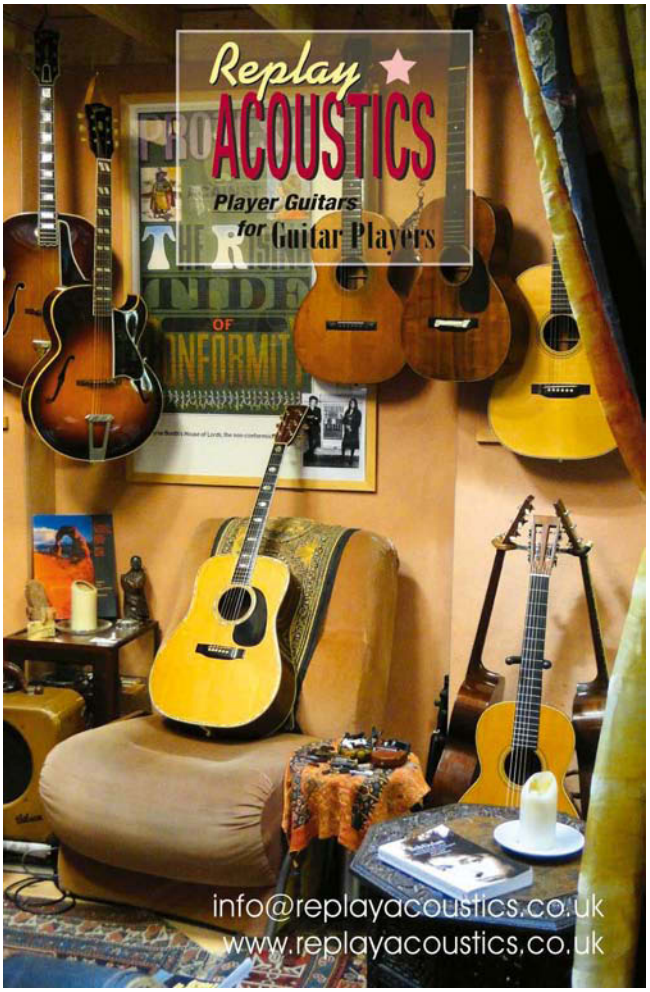

AUDEN CELTIC MANDOLINS

A trio of new mandolins from UK guitar brand Auden, each giving change from £500, but with only a different wood on the back and sides to separate them: which should you choose?

WORDS: SIMON MAYOR **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

Apart from the sheer fascination of receiving a mandolin for review, a strong sense of responsibility always kicks in: how to accurately convey to the reader its characteristics – sonic or otherwise – and to be careful to put any criticism in the context of its overall value for money. It always feels something of a privilege, too. As someone whose woodworking skills extend to chopping firewood, I retain huge admiration for all instrument makers, from lone artisans to those assembling factory-made mandolins on production lines.

So when not one, but three instruments fall through the letterbox, and I get a first bite at reviewing a brand new mandolin range from one of our established guitar manufacturers, it's a bit of a red letter day.

Auden has built a firm reputation for its guitars in what we might call the upper mid-price range, peaking at around £1,500. This is their first venture into the world of eight strings, and on offer is a range of three mandolins – all solid timber, non-laminate and identical in all respects apart from the woods used for the back and sides: maple, mahogany and rosewood. The former also sports a matching maple neck, with the latter two having mahogany versions.

Readers with long memories may recall back in 2008 I reviewed four mandolins made by the American luthier William Bussmann, each with a different hardwood for the back and sides. My conclusion then was that, certainly in those high-end instruments, different tonal characteristics were on offer from the different woods. Would the same be true of these Audens at the considerably more modest price of £499?

The Audens' construction clocks up quite a few sea miles. The woods are sourced by the Auden team in Asia from a European source. They are then assembled in China and shipped to the UK for quality control, with final set-up and inspection taking no fewer than four hours on each mandolin before it is offered for sale.

First, let's take a general look at the three instruments. They arrived in smart, imitation crocodile skin hard cases with a couple of substantial gold catches and a broad, comfortable handle. I was a little surprised that all three were way below concert pitch, but they slid up to the mark easily courtesy of some smooth, if a little chunky, unbranded machine heads. Despite being brand new instruments with brand new strings, they held their pitch well when I returned to play them a few days later, indicating a stable, solid construction.

'Solid' is a word that stays with me as I lift the first one – maple, as it happens – out of its case for closer inspection. This is a heavy mandolin. I try to find the point of balance by resting its heel on the palm of my hand. This causes the neck to lurch downwards, and I'm immediately aware that the bulk of the weight is towards the headstock. The machine heads no doubt contribute to this, but the neck is quite hefty too (32mm wide at the nut compared to 27mm on the instrument I usually play), and a glance inside the soundhole reveals the end of an adjustable steel truss rod. My feeling is that this is not going to move! In case you're getting the impression that I'm getting early bad vibes about this mandolin, I'm not. I would be worried if the weight were in the body, but for all its bulk, the gently cambered, U-shaped neck feels amazingly comfortable to play and the 360mm scale (8mm longer than a Gibson F5), tempered by an easy action, is not too much of a stretch even down in first position.

In fact, an instrument's balance should not be an issue at all when we play, as the hands should never be used to support the weight. If I stand to play I always use a strap; more usually I sit and don't feel the need for a strap as my own mandolin rests comfortably in my lap. However with an Auden, I might be tempted to use a strap even when seated just to prevent the neck tipping away from me.

Reaching a high C# on the top string, the fingerboard, with its understated hairline maple inlay around the edge, will extend far enough into the stratosphere for any mandolinist not wanting to play the finger-busting preludes of Raffaele Calace. Given that these are Auden's 'Celtic' models, we can safely assume the clue to its target market is in its name. The important thing is that we're offered a fingerboard with accurate intonation, and with all notes free from muffles, rattles and buzzes. I'm happy to confirm that with all three examples this is the case.

Further inspection of the body reveals a very high standard of neatness of construction and general finish, both inside and out. Rosewood and ebony are used for headstock veneers, fingerboards, bindings, bridge pins and the bridge itself. After experimenting with various prototypes, Auden avoided a floating bridge and opted for a glued, fixed bridge exactly as you'd expect to find on a flat-top guitar. Although this is contrary to both the established Italian (round-back) and American (carved) traditions of construction, it is not necessarily a bad thing; it can produce an instrument with excellent sustain. Still borrowing from guitar thinking,

AUDEN CELTIC MANDOLINS

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Auden
RRP: £499
Made In: China
Top: Reclaimed fir
Back and Sides: Solid mahogany/rosewood/maple
Bridge: Ebony
Neck: Mahogany (maple on maple-backed model)
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Nut Width: 32mm
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hard cases
Pros: Immediately engaging mandolin, which would be great in most situations apart from aggressive bluegrass playing

MAHOGANY

Cons: No obvious 'cons', but have you tried the rosewood and maple versions?
Overall: A simple, honest, no frills mandolin. Excellent value for money

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪○○
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪○
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Immediately engaging mandolin, which would be great in most situations apart from aggressive bluegrass playing
Cons: No obvious 'cons', but have you tried the rosewood and maple versions?
Overall: A simple, honest, no frills mandolin. Excellent value for money

ROSEWOOD

Pros: Without a doubt the warm and complex low and mid-range
Cons: While the treble is sweet and penetrating, it may lack a little attack for some players
Overall: If your playing style suits, this could easily be a mandolin for life

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪○
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪○
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪

MAPLE

Pros: The clarity of the piercing, yet sweet and rounded upper register, so typical of maple instruments
Cons: You may have to work a little harder to get the lower notes to sound warm, but the sound is there
Overall: Potentially the best of the bunch

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪○
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.audenguitars.com

these mandolins have internal X-bracing. Some mandolin makers have been experimenting with this in recent years and have found it can give a warmer, more sustaining sound, yet once again it goes against the established wisdom of either a violin-style tone bar parallel to the grain or simple bars across the grain.

The timber used for the tops of the instruments is a point of real interest. Head man at Auden, Doug Sparkes, revealed to me that they had obtained quantities of 100-year-old salvaged fir from 'unspecified' sources (if he revealed more, he'd have to kill me). Not having any model with a top made from new fir, it's impossible to tell whether the age of this one component makes a new mandolin sound more mature, but we can at least be sure of a well-seasoned soundboard, unlikely to cause any structural problems. On purely aesthetic grounds, it lends the tops of the instruments a lovely red-brown sheen.

And so to the sound. What all three mandolins have in common is a huge, vibrant sustain, which is immediately engaging, warm and cosy, making me want to play slow chordal pieces. They would all be great as rhythm instruments too, not so much for chopping closed chords as a bluegrass player would (although the maple one has a decent 'bark'), but for a more open-string style to accompany Celtic music. For melody playing, they all have a strong treble, perhaps a little clangy on the mahogany model, but sweeter on both the rosewood and maple versions.

The mahogany one is probably the least satisfying, not because it's in any way a bad instrument, but because in comparison with the others it sounds a little one-dimensional. It has warmth, it has a good treble, and if it's the first one I pick up after a break I feel I could quite happily play it for the rest of the evening, but once I try the others I realise its tonal palette is restricted by comparison.

I'm immediately seduced by the rosewood model's fruity depth of tone down the bottom end. I expect to be disappointed as I move up the neck, but it has strong harmonic overtones that make the upper register project well. The high notes sound penetrating but sweet, making the mahogany model now sound harsher and less subtle.

And so to the maple model. This is without doubt the loudest. True, it lacks the fruity low register of the rosewood model, but an experienced plectrum user will know how to coax a warmth out of maple that may not be immediately apparent to a beginner player. I find if I want to play hard and push the volume, I can do so without the tone cracking up. But the real bonus is the penetrating, yet still sweet and nutty treble, which to my ears is going to project in a hall and carry a melody more successfully than the other two.

So what can we conclude? At £499, nobody would expect an instrument made by a sole luthier, so we are looking at factory instruments here, but it seems to me significant that the differences between the tonewoods on offer are every bit as apparent as in the more expensive William Bussmann instruments I reviewed eight years ago. Had these Audens been knocked off in a hurry on some dodgy production line, I'd suggest they'd all sound pretty much the same, and like many other cheap instruments,

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"I'm immediately seduced by the rosewood model's fruity depth of tone down the bottom end"

for that matter. But that's not the case; they actually feel that, despite the production process being spread across the globe, there's a sufficiently rigorous quality control and pride in manufacture that gives these instruments a sound and a feel way beyond their price tag. If you're thinking of spending this kind of money on a mandolin, and you're after this 'Celtic' style design, I'd strongly suggest putting these on your shortlist. Equally importantly, try to find somewhere with examples of all three woods so you can make your own judgement. To my ears, Stradivari got it right with maple and should have concentrated on mandolins rather than fiddles, but you may disagree. ■

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Faith

FAITH SIGNATURE MERCURY SOLID CLARO WALNUT

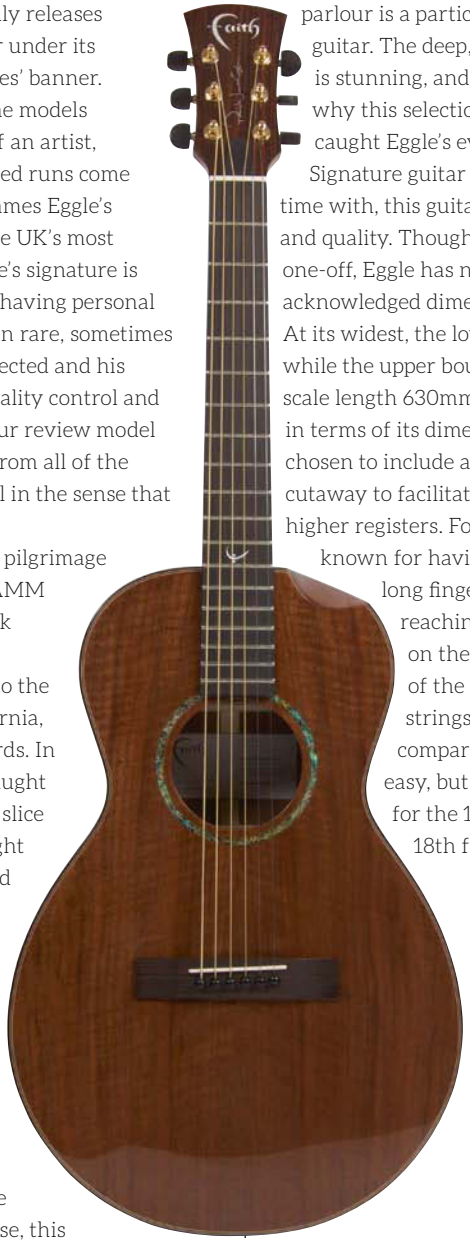
With so many high-volume models in the marketplace, true and affordable one-offs become rare. Steve Harvey tests the latest Faith Signature series featuring tonewoods hand-selected by Patrick James Eggle

WORDS: STEVE HARVEY **IMAGES:** MEGGIE WILSON

Faith occasionally releases a special guitar under its 'Signature Series' banner. Rather than the models bearing the signature of an artist, all guitars in these limited runs come adorned with Patrick James Eggle's autograph. As one of the UK's most respected luthiers, Eggle's signature is justified on the basis of having personal involvement in the often rare, sometimes unusual, tonewoods selected and his hands-on input over quality control and set-up of each guitar. Our review model here not only benefits from all of the above, but is also special in the sense that it's a complete one-off.

As part of his annual pilgrimage to California for the NAMM show in January, Patrick Eggle likes to take the opportunity to trek up to the hills in Northern California, famed for its timber yards. In 2015, Eggle's eye was caught by a particularly pretty slice of walnut. It was the right cut, clean, well-seasoned and, most importantly, stable. Only enough for a single guitar, the said selection was duly purchased and has been used for the parlour on test.

Straight out of the snuggly fitting Faith-branded, four-clasp (one lockable) luxury hardcase, this parlour is a particularly striking guitar. The deep, textured grain is stunning, and it's easy to see why this selection of walnut caught Eggle's eye. As with every Signature guitar we've spent time with, this guitar exudes class and quality. Though this parlour is a one-off, Eggle has not fiddled with the acknowledged dimensions of a parlour. At its widest, the lower bout is 13.25", while the upper bout is 9.25" and the scale length 630mm. Although 'standard' in terms of its dimensions, Eggle has chosen to include a modern scoop cutaway to facilitate easier access to the higher registers. For this reviewer, not known for having particularly long fingers, reaching notes on the 16th fret of the top four strings was comparatively easy, but less so for the 17th and 18th frets.



The specially selected walnut has been used to form the guitar's entire body, though an ebony centre-strip sits between the two pieces of the back and continues down to the base of the guitar, serving the same purpose where the sides meet. Ebony has also been used for the heel cap, bridge and as a fascia on both sides of the headstock. The guitar's decorative cupboard is comparatively bare, consisting of just an abalone inlaid soundhole rosette and Faith motif at the 12th fret, but less is definitely more. The simple, sleek lines and quality tonewoods on offer here are plenty enough to justify calling this guitar a 'looker'.

The two-piece mahogany neck sits upon a stacked heel and is home to an ebony fingerboard fitted with 18 faultlessly finished frets. Highly polished gold-coloured tuning posts and machine heads are capped with ebony buttons. Although doing their job perfectly well, we'd perhaps have liked to have seen Kluson or Waverly tuners; maybe a set of open-geared tuners would have suited this singular production model better, rather than the more commonly used Grovers.

Despite its modest frame, this Faith Signature model feels significantly well-built to avoid feeling fragile or delicate. It has been our

FAITH SIGNATURE MERCURY SOLID CLARO WALNUT

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Faith Guitars
Model: (FSG-M-WWE) Faith Signature Mercury Solid Claro Walnut
RRP: £1,799
Body Size: Parlour
Made In: Indonesia
Top: Claro walnut
Back & Sides: Claro walnut
Bridge: Macassan ebony
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Macassan ebony
Frets: 18
Tuners: Grover 18:1 Rotomatics nickel
Nut Width: 45mm
Scale Length: 630mm
Onboard Electrics: None
Strings Fitted: D'Addario EXP
Gig Bag/Case Included: Faith hardcase

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Top-drawer build quality and materials, fantastic tone and response
Cons: Perhaps only the desire for tuners more in-keeping with the exclusivity of the guitar
Overall: Another Faith Signature series worthy of Patrick James Eggle's autograph

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.faithguitars.com

"The tonal separation is so well-suited to fingerstyle that giving it a thrashing with a pick feels disrespectful"

experience that Eggle's guitars, be they Faith Signature models or his own line of acoustics, succeed in capturing the tricky balance of being sufficiently lightweight to be vibrant and resonant while still being robust enough to endure regular travelling and general daily abuse. Our parlour review model feels exactly the same; elegant and refined, yet substantial and strong.

And so to how the guitar actually performs. Patrick Eggle once described the challenge of building sonically capable parlour guitars as, 'shooting through a smaller window'. Due to the reduced and compact size of their body, parlour guitars can sometimes suffer from sounding boxy and a little one dimensional, while manufacturers that get it right produce parlour guitars that boast a sweet, intimate tone. It may not surprise you to learn that this Faith Signature model is an absolute joy to play, both tonally and functionally. The guitar's set-up is as good as you'll find. Straight out of the box, the action is bang-on and the fit and finish of the fretwork makes for joyous and relaxed note production.

In terms of its output, the all-solid walnut offers a dry, plummy, deep timbre. The lower mid-range is strong yet well-balanced, so much so that the use of a thumb-pick is unwarranted for fingerstyle duties. Though it performs well with a pick in hand, strumming this guitar might be considered as missing the point; the dynamics and tonal separation on offer here is so well-suited to fingerstyle playing that giving it a thrashing with a pick feels disrespectful.

Of particular note is how responsive the guitar is. Playing fingerstyle with just the fleshy part of the right-hand fingers releases a hushed, whispering tone that gives indication of the headroom available. Digging-in to varying degrees unleashes a range of full-bodied, woody outputs that hint at the dirt of an all-mahogany guitar, while retaining warmth and prettiness of a quality parlour. As such, we'd suggest that this guitar is best suited for the lounge player who finds themselves most at home playing fingerstyle rather than a singer-songwriter on open-mic or onstage duties. Having said that, we can see this guitar performing well in a studio setting where high-quality microphones can pick up the nuances of its tone.

Overall, this one-off Faith lives up to the high standards set by its predecessors. It's beautifully made, pleasing on the eye and offers an arresting tone that will only improve as the guitar matures. Perhaps the greatest compliment this reviewer can pay the guitar is that, not currently an owner of a parlour, I'm already looking at my collection and wondering which one I could dispense with to facilitate its purchase. ■

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6 String Acoustics

15275 - A Clarke No. 9 Handmade Acoustic Guitar
13028 - Atkin 'The Forty Three' J45
13022 - Atkin OO Am Special Parlour Guitar
15214 - Breedlove Discovery Concert
14197 - Breedlove Discovery Concert Lefthanded
13367 - Brook Lyn 12 Fret Handmade Guitar
13189 - Brook Tamar Medium Jumbo Handmade
13188 - Brook Taw OM Size Handmade Guitar
13366 - Brook Teign Dreadnought Handmade Guitar
4612 - Dave King Katrina OOO Model, Sunburst
4770 - EKO Ranger Vintage Acoustic, Natural
13544 - Eko Oliveiro Pigini Ltd Edition Acoustic
13847 - Eko Ranger 6 VR Fastlok, Vint. SB Gloss
13552 - Eko Vintage Ranger 6 in Black, Reissue
15233 - Faith FKN Naked Neptune Acoustic Guitar
14718 - Faith FMSB45 BNC Classic Burst Mercury
12331 - Faith FRMG Mars Drop Shoulder Dread.
14713 - Faith FRSB Drop Dreadnought, Sunburst
14715 - Faith FRSB45 Drop Dreadnought
6975 - Fender CD60, Black
5096 - Fender CD60, Natural
14861 - Fender CD60, Natural, Used
5079 - Fender CD60, Sunburst
10245 - Fender CD60 Acoustic Guitar, Mahogany
15197 - Fender PM1 Standard Dreadnought, Natural
15244 - Fender PM2 Standard Parlour Guitar, Nat
14304 - Fender Starcaster Acoustic Guitar Pack
14526 - Guild D52-NT USA Made
7090 - K Yairi New Yorker NY0021B, Natural
13614 - K Yairi YT1 Acoustic Guitar
12652 - Lakewood D14 Dreadnought Acoustic Guitar
12649 - Lakewood M14 Grand Concert
13386 - Landola D85 Dreadnought Acoustic, Used
14127 - Luna Vista Mustang Electro Acoustic
15310 - Martin 00015M Mahogany Acoustic, Used
13064 - Martin D18 Dreadnought, Secondhand
5702 - Martin D28 Dreadnought, Natural
5013 - Martin D41 Dreadnought, Natural
7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin
13581 - Martin SWOMGT Orchestra Shape, Used
15258 - Rainsong NP12 Nylon Parlour Guitar
11149 - Seagull Excursion Natural Folk SG
11148 - Seagull Excursion Natural Grand SG
11162 - Seagull Maritime SWS Mahogany High-Gloss
10230 - Seagull S6 Original
13291 - Tanglewood TPEFLS
9587 - Tanglewood TSJ XFM Super Jumbo
9570 - Tanglewood TW40 DAN Dreadnought
14943 - Tanglewood TW40 SD VS
13081 - Vintage V2000MGG Acoustic Guitar
13269 - Vintage V400CSB, Cherry Sunburst
10929 - Vintage VE2000DLX Gordon Giltrap
14397 - Vintage VE8000PB Paul Brett 6-String
13272 - Vintage VJ100N XL Jumbo Series, Natural
12437 - Yairi FY84 OM Folk Acoustic Guitar
12428 - Yairi Rag 65 Small Parlour Guitar
5632 - Yamaha F310 Dreadnought, Natural
6964 - Yamaha FG700S Acoustic Guitar
15229 - Yamaha FG730S Vintage Cherry Burst, Used
14483 - Yamaha FS720S Acoustic, Black

6 String Electro Acoustics

10918 - Breedlove USA Gold D/SRE
13866 - Breedlove Discovery Concert CE, Sunburst
14690 - Breedlove Focus Special Edition Redwood
15224 - Breedlove Pursuit Concert Acoustic
14689 - Breedlove Revival DR Deluxe
14688 - Breedlove Voice Auditorium Small Jumbo
14686 - Breedlove Voice Concert Myrtle
14630 - Breedlove Voice Revival 000/SMe
10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cherry
14222 - Crafter GAE6 Electro Acoustic, Natural
4769 - EKO Ranger EQ Vintage Series, Black
12358 - Faith FKV Venus Concert Cutaway/Electro
14717 - Faith FVHG Venus Cut/Electro Acoustic
12360 - Fender Avril Lavigne Newporter Electro Acoustic
14730 - Fender CD100CE Left-Handed Cutaway
14534 - Fender CD220SCE Ash Cutaway Dreadnought
7024 - Fender CD60CE, Dreadnought, Electro, Nat
10320 - Fender CD60CE Mahogany Electro Acoustic
14732 - Fender CJ290SCE Jumbo Maple With Case
14605 - Fender Limited Edition Paisley Telecoustic
15280 - Fender PM1 Deluxe, Vintage Sunburst
14744 - Fender Sonoran SCE Left-hand Dreadnought
14745 - Fender Sonoran SCE Thinline, Black
9700 - Gibson J45 Custom Electro Acoustic
15087 - James Neligan DEVPFI Parlour Guitar Used
4555 - Jimmy Moon Bryan Adams Signature
4554 - Jimmy Moon PF0003 Electro, Pau Ferro B&S
6948 - Jimmy Moon RD3, Electro, Natural
12672 - Lakewood J14CP Jumbo Electro
12658 - Lakewood M14 CP

6 String Electro Acoustics

14129 - Luna Heartsong Series Parlor Electro
14130 - Luna Henna Oasis Steel String Electro
14471 - Luna Vista Eagle Electro Acoustic Guitar
14128 - Luna Vista Wolf Electro Acoustic Guitar
13717 - Maestro Raffles AB-CSB A Guitar
13714 - Maestro Raffles FM-CSB A Custom Jumbo
12696 - Maestro Raffles Flame Maple Cust Electro
12702 - Maestro Raffles IR-CSB R Small Jumbo Electro
12790 - Maestro Raffles MDT Small Jumbo Electro
12789 - Maestro Raffles Monkey Pod Electro
13713 - Maestro Raffles MR-CSB A Custom Jumbo
14817 - Maestro Raffles MR-CSB-A Fanned Frets
12792 - Maestro Rosetta MDT Dreadnought Electro
12793 - Maestro Rosetta MRDT Dreadnought Electro
13212 - Maestro Singa Flame Maple Custom Electro
14814 - Maestro Singa M-CSB-C All Solid MedJumbo
13712 - Maestro Singa MR-CSB A Custom Jumbo
13209 - Maestro Singa MRDT Medium Jumbo Electro
13711 - Maestro Singa O-CSB Custom Medium Jumbo
14815 - Maestro Singa WE-CSB-A Medium Jumbo
14816 - Maestro Vera IR-SB-A Vintage All Solid
13718 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13207 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
12222 - Martin & Co DX1AE Electro Acoustic
15164 - Martin 000RS1
14479 - Martin 000RSGT Electro Acoustic Guitar
8277 - Martin DC15ME Dreadnought Cutaway
14780 - Martin DJR Dreadnought Junior
14477 - Martin DRS2 Electro Acoustic Guitar
14478 - Martin DRSGT Electro Acoustic Guitar
13674 - Martin OMXAE Electro Acoustic, Black
12439 - Northwood Custom Koa 80D Electro
12438 - Northwood Custom Myrtle 80 Series D-nought
14913 - PJ Eggle Linville Cutaway Elec/Acoustic
14914 - PJ Eggle Linville Electro Acoustic
14915 - PJ Eggle Parlour Electro Acoustic
14926 - PJ Eggle Saulda Cutaway Elec/Acoustic
14927 - PJ Eggle Saulda Elec/Acoustic
10095 - RainSong BI-JM1000N2 Graphite Guitar
10094 - RainSong BI-OM1000N2 Black Ice Graphite
10038 - RainSong BI-WS1000N2 Black Ice Graphite
9821 - Rainsong CO-JM1000N2
9819 - Rainsong CO-OM1000N2
9818 - Rainsong CO-WS1000N2
9815 - Rainsong JM1000 Graphite Guitar
4812 - RainSong OM1000N2 Electro Acousti
10082 - RainSong P12 Parlor
10088 - RainSong P14 Parlor
9824 - Rainsong S-DR1000N2 Dreadnought Studio
9822 - Rainsong S-WS1000N2 WS Studio Electro
9827 - RainSong SG Shorty Gloss Shorty Series
7974 - Rainsong WS1000N2 Graphite Guitar
15259 - Rainsong SMCX Smokey Series
15257 - Rainsong SMH Smokey Hybrid
5257 - Satori YD18EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
8234 - Satori YD42EQ Electro Acoustic, Vint Nat
5255 - Satori YO28HEQ, OM Electro, Natural
15077 - Takamine EF407 Electro Acoustic, Used
14251 - Takamine EF508KC NEX Cutaway Electro
12236 - Takamine EN20C Electro Acoustic
14253 - Takamine GD30CE Electro Acoustic, Nat
14257 - Takamine GF30CE Brown Sunburst
14261 - Takamine GY93E New Yorker Electro
14249 - Takamine P1DC Electro Acoustic Guitar
13295 - Tanglewood TPESFCEZS Electro Acoustic
14952 - Tanglewood TSF CE Black
14953 - Tanglewood Evolution IV TSF CE Natural
14950 - Tanglewood Evolution IV TSF CE Red
14954 - Tanglewood EvolutionTSFCE Sunburst Gloss
14951 - Tanglewood TSF CE White
13480 - Tanglewood TVC Koa Electro Acoustic
13462 - Tanglewood TVC XB
13459 - Tanglewood TW115 SSCE
4187 - Tanglewood TW40 OANE Orchestra
14947 - Tanglewood TWCR OE Crossroads
13485 - Taylor 515CE Electro Acoustic, Used
12571 - Taylor 814CE Electro Acoustic, Used
14419 - Vintage Pilgrim VPG900 Mayflower Deluxe
8007 - Vintage Gordon Giltrap Signature
13399 - Vintage VECJ100 Jumbo Acoustic Black
8306 - Westcoast SW201-VT Electro Acoustic, Nat
14427 - Yamaha APX1000 Slimline Guitar, Natural
14434 - Yamaha APX700 II Thinline, Natural
14492 - Yamaha CPX1000 Electro Acoustic, Natural
14441 - Yamaha CPX500 III, Black
6961 - Yamaha CPX700 Electro Acoustic Sandburst
9304 - Yamaha CPX900 Brown Sunburst
14423 - Yamaha FGX720SC, Brown Sunburst
14422 - Yamaha FGX720SC, Natural
14421 - Yamaha FJX720SC Electro, Sunburst
14420 - Yamaha FX310A Guitar, Natural
6966 - Yamaha FX370C Dreadnought Electro, Black
6965 - Yamaha FX370C Electro Acoustic, Natural
8141 - Yamaha SLG110S Silent Steel String Guitar
14418 - Yamaha SLG110S Silent Steel String Guitar
14522 - Yamaha SLG200S Silent Guitar, Steel

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15240 - Admira A20 Classical Handcrafted Guitar
14922 - Admira Alba 4/4 Full Size Classical
13025 - Admira Malaga Classical Guitar, USED
8590 - Azahar Model 31A Classical Guitar
8507 - Mendieta Conservatoire C Classical
8240 - Mendieta Estudio T Classical Guitar
5360 - Ramirez 130 Year Aniversary Classical
6029 - Ramirez 1NE Classical Guitar
15239 - Ramirez 2NCWE Classical Guitar
15236 - Ramirez 4NE Classical Guitar
5644 - Ramirez George Harrison Model Classical
6336 - Ramirez R2 Classical Guitar
15237 - Ramirez RA Classical Guitar
15238 - Ramirez RB Classical Guitar
6027 - Ramirez S1 Classical Guitar
12761 - Ramirez SP Classical Guitar
6441 - Roberto C2 Classical Guitar
14942 - Tanglewood DBT12 3/4 Classical Guitar
9483 - Tanglewood DBT34 3/4 Classical Guitar
10999 - Westcoast Student 4/4 Classical, Red
14720 - Yamaha C40II Full Size Classical Guitar
14721 - Yamaha CX40 Mark II Electro-Classical

12 Strings

13553 - Eko Vintage Ranger 12 in Black
14525 - Guild JF230-AB USA-Made c1997
10991 - Tanglewood TRD12 Lefty . Nat
14398 - Vintage VE2000GG12 Giltrap 12-String
14349 - Vintage VE8000PB-12 Paul Brett

Mandolin Family

8826 - Ashbury AM-325 Octave Mandola
15158 - Ashbury GR31017 Celtic Mandolin, Used
13527 - Blue Moon BB15 Bouzouki GR33001
14028 - Breedlove Crossover OO O Hole , Black
14500 - Breedlove Crossover Mandolin, VV
12568 - Fender Concert Tone "F" 63S Mandolin
14740 - Fender Concert Tone Mandolin "A" 52E
14741 - Fender Concert Tone Mandolin "A" 53S
4551 - Jimmy Moon A Plus E Electro, Natural
9240 - Jimmy Moon A2 Acoustic Mandolin, Natural
4564 - Jimmy Moon A Plus Electro Bouzouki, Nat
4553 - Jimmy Moon Standard Mandolin
9430 - Ozark Flat Back Bouzouki
8315 - Westcoast M20 Mandolin Sunburst
12347 - Westcoast M20S Mandolin Sunburst

Acoustic Amplification

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13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp
10496 - Fender Acoustasonic 15 Acoustic Amp
8166 - Fender Acoustasonic 150 Acoustic Combo
9166 - Loudbox Artist
4548 - Fishman Loudbox Mini - 60W, 1x6.5"
5286 - Fishman SA220 - 220w, 6x4"
13282 - Markbass AC101 Acoustic Combo
6770 - Marshall AS100D - 50W+50W, 2x8"
13956 - Marshall AS50D - 50W, 2x8"
15059 - Marshall AS50D RED - 50W, 2x8"
4976 - Roland AC33 30W - 1x5"
9358 - Roland AC33, Rosewood
11129 - Roland AC40 Acoustic Guitar Amplifier
6505 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Amp - 30w, 2x6.5
9383 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Guitar Combo, RW
5597 - Roland AC90 - 90W, 2x8"
5574 - Roland Cube Street 2.5+2.5W, 6.5
14371 - MOBILE AC Acoustic Chorus, Portable Amp
13018 - Tanglewood T3 30W Acoustic Amplifier
8108 - Tanglewood T6, 60W
14941 - Tanglewood TBA5 5 Watt Acoustic Amp
13471 - Tanglewood TXS Bass Sub
10937 - Yamaha THR5A Acoustic Amp

Ukuleles

12564 - Barnes & Mullins BJ306 6-String Banjo
4371 - Barnes & Mullins UBJ1 Banjo Ukulele
14820 - Baton Rouge Tenor Uke Cutaway, LEFTY
14650 - Baton Rouge V4TCE Electro Tenor Uke
14395 - Beano Ukulele Minnie the Minx Uke Outfit
14394 - Beano Ukulele Outfit Gnasher Ukulele Outfit
15147 - Blue Moon Tenor Ukulele Pear-Shaped
14697 - Collings UT2 Tenor Ukulele, Secondhand
14557 - Deering Goodtime Ukulele Banjo
14674 - Eko Evo Soprano Ukulele, Cedar Top
9081 - Fender Mino'Aka Concert Ukulele
13616 - Fender Piha'ea Soprano Ukulele
12800 - Kala KA-BNJ/BK-C Concert Banjo Ukulele
9345 - Kala U Bass Electro Ac In Solid Mahogany
8127 - Kala U Bass in Mahogany
4722 - Kala U-Bass 2 Electro Acoustic Ukulele
13978 - Laka Concert Ukulele with GigBag
13979 - Laka Soprano Ukulele with Case
13883 - Magic Fluke M30 Flea Sop Uke, Mahogany
14866 - Magic Fluke Timber Elec. Bass, Fretless
8128 - Martin S1 Ukulele
13679 - Nukulele "Abbots Digit" Bottle Ukulele
13684 - Nukulele Autumn Gold Bottle Ukulele
13680 - Nukulele "Brown Ale" Bottle Ukulele
13681 - Nukulele "Helles Bier" Bottle Ukulele
13683 - Nukulele Lemonade Bottle Ukulele
13682 - Nukulele Slainte Bottle Ukulele
8514 - Ohana BK10 Baritone Ukulele
8515 - Ohana BK20 Baritone Ukulele
12610 - Ohana BK22 Baritone Ukulele
12609 - Ohana BKB35E Bass Ukulele
13633 - Ohana CK15BK Concert Ukulele, Black
13634 - Ohana CK15BL Concert Ukulele, Blue
12605 - Ohana CK15Z Concert Ukulele
8520 - Ohana CK35CE Electro Concert Ukulele
12603 - Ohana CK38 Concert Ukulele
8513 - Ohana CK50MG Concert Ukulele
8508 - Ohana PK10S Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
8516 - Ohana PK25G Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
13637 - Ohana SK10GN Soprano Uke, Matte Green
4712 - Ohana SK10S Soprano Ukulele
13636 - Ohana SK10YW Soprano Uke, Matte Yellow
13644 - Ohana SK12 Soprano Ukulele
4711 - Ohana SK20S Soprano Ukulele Uke
14210 - Ohana SK21M Premium Mahogany Sopranino
13626 - Ohana SK22 Soprano Ukulele
8517 - Ohana SK22Z Sop Ukulele Zebrawood B&S
13642 - Ohana SK23 Soprano Ukulele
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14211 - Ohana SK70BA Spruce & Morinda Sop Uke
14508 - Ohana SK70L Soprano Ukulele
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13311 - Ohana Concert Uke Gig Bag
13312 - Ohana Tenor Uke Gig Bag
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5009 - Ozark Ukulele Banjo
12740 - ResoVille Weeki Wachee Resonator Ukulele
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10385 - Risa UKS385MP Solid Concert Electro Uke
10424 - Uluru Lehua I Soprano Ukulele
12376 - Yamaha GL1 Guitalele

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14472 - Luna Safari Starry Night 3/4 Travel Guitar
5835 - Martin Backpacker Acoustic Travel Guitar
13324 - Martin LX Red Little Martin
7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin
7320 - Martin LX1E, Electro Travel Guitar
9588 - Tanglewood TW15 Baby All Solid Travel
14628 - Tanglewood TWJLJ, Secondhand
13271 - Vintage VTG100 Travel Guitar in Natural
14522 - Yamaha SLG200S Silent Guitar, Steel
8846 - Ashbury AT-14 Tenor Guitar
8851 - Ashbury AT24 Tenor Guitar
14615 - Dobro, circa 1975, Original Vintage
12613 - Fender FR50CE Cutaway Electro Resonator
14530 - Gibson Dobro USA Made Resonator, Used
12737 - ResoVille Parkville MS12 Single Cone Nic
12730 - ResoVille Burbank MT12 Tri-Cone, Nickel
12732 - ResoVille Burbank MT12 Tri-Cone, Gold
12731 - ResoVille Burbank MT12 Tri-Cone, Red Cop
13244 - ResoVille Edgewood WS12R Maple Parlor
12738 - ResoVille Lincolnwood WS12 Reso, Maple
12735 - ResoVille Parkville MS12 Single Cone Nic
12734 - ResoVille Riverdale Lefty MT14CL TriCone
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FESTIVAL ACOUSTIC GUIDE

THE GREAT ESCAPE

The Great Escape is a fine way to discover new bands. It's also attended by music industry scouts on the hunt for the next big thing. For artists, the convention that runs alongside the festival features insightful panels, topical debates, keynote speeches and networking opportunities in abundance.

The Alternative Escape, Spotlight Shows, secret gigs, club nights and spontaneous collaborations all add to the festivities and make this weekend in Brighton one not to miss.

Acoustic's picks: Over 450 emerging artists. See as many as you can! + **Date:** 19-21 May + **Location:** Brighton + **Price:** £65.60 + **Anything else:** Some venues have reduced their age cap to 16 for 2016.

www.greatescapefestival.com

© Phil Richards

BEARDED THEORY FESTIVAL

The theory behind Bearded Theory seems to be: pack a bunch of ace bands and musicians onto an estate in Derbyshire, make sure that kids and teens are welcome, run a host of stages and make sure everyone has a great time. Oh, and it's another festival that's racked up awards over the last few years, including best small festival in 2013. Beards optional, but encouraged.

Acoustic's picks: Billy Bragg, Beans on Toast, Jack Savoretti + **Date:** 26-29 May + **Location:** Catton Hall, Derbyshire + **Price:** £97 + **Anything else:** Bearded Theory Festival Ale (3.8 per cent) will be on tap.

www.beardedtheory.co.uk

ACOUSTIC FESTIVAL OF GREAT BRITAIN

A festival that's right up our alley. The Acoustic Festival of Great Britain showcases the best of acoustic music, alongside workshops, comedy, a literary corner, Q&A sessions with the performers and traders on-site.

Acoustic's Picks: Blair Dunlop, Chris Woods Groove Orchestra, Midge Ure + **Date:** 3-5 June + **Location:** Uttoxeter Racecourse, Staffordshire + **Price:** Weekend £85 + **Anything else:** The festival has adopted a steampunk theme this year.

www.acousticfestival.co.uk

WYCHWOOD FESTIVAL

As well as its strong musical offering, Wychwood Festival is also offering dance workshops, yoga, circus classes, late night cabaret, and arts and crafts. This year, the Cheltenham Poetry Festival will join Wychwood.

Acoustic's Picks: 10cc, Idlewild, the Waterboys
Date: 3-5 June + **Location:** Cheltenham Racecourse
Price: Weekend £135 + **Anything else:** Always a huge range of music on offer
www.wychwoodfestival.com

GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL

The premier festival in the UK with the capacity to draw the biggest names in music to its many stages. The iconic Pyramid stage remains at the heart of Worthy Farm's offering, but spread across the sprawling site you will find all corners of music covered, with plenty of acoustic goodness to be enjoyed.

Acoustic's picks: Art Garfunkel, Richard Hawley, Jake Bugg + **Date:** 22-26 June + **Location:** Worthy Farm, Somerset + **Price:** Sold out (Start saving for next year's festival, which will take place on 21-25 June) + **Anything else:** Don't forget to pack your wellies along with your artisanal organic spelt loaf.
www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk

LARMER TREE FESTIVAL

Larmer Tree Festival is a five-day music and arts festival that is an intimate and eccentric festival, perfect for first-timers and experienced festival fans alike. Larmer Tree Festival delights in remaining small – with 4,000 revellers a day on site – and remaining independent and sponsor free.

Acoustic's Picks: Calexico, Jamie Cullum, Tom Odell
Date: 13-17 July + **Location:** Larmer Tree Gardens, Dorset + **Price:** Three-day £170
Anything else: It boasts award winning loos!
www.larmertreefestival.co.uk

ISLE OF WIGHT

The Isle of Wight festival is the first major festival in the summer calendar, so it's your first port of call if you're looking to tick off the big boys this year. And, if you want a festival with heritage, consider that the IOW stage has been graced by Jimi Hendrix, the Rolling Stones and Fleetwood Mac – it wasn't called the Woodstock of Europe for nothing.

Acoustic's picks: Gabrielle Aplin, the Who, Queen + Adam Lambert + **Date:** 9-12 June + **Location:** Isle of Wight + **Price:** Full weekend £195
Anything else: Busted are playing. Repeat, Busted are playing.
www.isleofwightfestival.com

MAVERICK FESTIVAL

The Maverick Festival is a celebration of Americana and roots music from both sides of the Atlantic across five stages. Children are encouraged to enjoy all the delights of East Anglia's answer to Nashville as under 10s can enter for free.

Acoustic's Picks: Los Pacaminos feat. Neil Young, Robert Vincent, Sam Outlaw + **Date:** 1-3 July **Location:** Easton Farm Park, Suffolk + **Price:** Weekend camping £85 + **Anything else:** It's set on a working farm.
www.maverickfestival.co.uk

2,000 TREES

2,000 Trees is a 5,000 cap music festival set in the Cotswolds countryside with an emphasis on up-and-coming rock acts. With over 80 artists to see over the weekend, it's jam packed with talent.

Acoustic's picks: The Xcerts, the Smith Street Band, Jim Lockey + **Date:** 7-9 July + **Location:** Upcote Farm, Cheltenham + **Price:** £79
Anything else: While not loaded with acoustic artists, bands have been known to perform impromptu acoustic sets in the campsite after hours.
www.twothousandtreesfestival.co.uk

© Eva Powell

LATITUDE

Latitude is more than just a music festival – it crams the best of live comedy, poetry, theatre and cabaret to create an all-round culture extravaganza. It's also heavily weighted towards families attending, with plenty to see and do for the young 'uns.

Acoustic's Picks: Father John Misty, Squeeze, Michael Kiwanuka + **Date:** 14-17 July + **Location:** Henham Park, Suffolk + **Price:** Weekend £197.50 + **Anything else:** An absolutely stacked comedy bill, including Russell Howard, Josh Widdicombe and David O'Doherty.
www.lattitudefestival.com

BEVERLEY FOLK FESTIVAL

British folk music, both traditional and new, remains at the heart of the festival, but it's also a showcase for Americana, world music, blues and even classic rock. Aside from music you can also find performances in comedy, film, poetry, drama, dance and Morris troupes, literature and the spoken word.

Acoustic's Picks: Kate Rusby, Steeleye Span, the Lindisfarne Story + **Date:** 17-19 June + **Location:** Beverley Racecourse, Beverley + **Price:** Weekend £105
Anything else: The festival has added a big top marquee for 2016.
www.beverleyfestival.com

BARN ON THE FARM

Barn on the Farm is an intimate, folk-orientated music festival held in several barns, on a farm, in Gloucestershire. It was created in 2010 as a small venture, driven by a passion for decent, new music.

Acoustic's Picks: Jack Garrett, Zak Abel, JP Cooper
Date: 4-6 July + **Location:** Over Farm, Gloucestershire
Price: Weekend £105 + **Anything else:** BOTF has a reputation for giving a stage to emerging artists who go on to hit the big time.
www.barnonthefarm.co.uk

T IN THE PARK

T in the Park is the jewel in the Scottish festival calendar and often gains mainstream attention thanks to heavy coverage from the BBC. By the way, the 'T' stands for Tennents, the Scottish brewery, who provide all the lager at the festival. It's estimated that over three million pints have been quaffed at the event since 1994.

Acoustic's Picks: James Bay, Rodrigo y Gabriela, Frank Turner + **Date:** 8-10 July + **Location:** Strathallan Castle, Perthshire, Scotland + **Price:** Weekend £205
Anything else: The festival site becomes the equivalent of the fifth largest town in Scotland over the weekend.
www.tinthepark.com

CHAGSTOCK FESTIVAL

Chagstock is a homegrown festival and not for profit organisation that's proud to support the Devon Air Ambulance Trust and WaterAid. This year is Chagstock's 10th anniversary, so expect plenty of bon homie and reasons to celebrate.

Acoustic's Picks: Donovan, the Stranglers, the Blockheads
Date: 22-23 July + **Location:** Dartmoor, Devon + **Price:** Weekend £75 + **Anything else:** There's a bouncy castle. And it's set within Dartmoor.
www.chagstock.info

1928 LARSON BROTHERS STAHL STYLE 6

Replay Acoustics' Tony Werneke gets his hands on a fine example of the Larson Brothers' ground-breaking guitar-making

Once in a while you come across an instrument that you have heard of but never thought you would have in hand. For me, this is one of them: the 1928 Larson Brothers' Stahl Style 6.

The Larson brothers, Carl and August, worked in Chicago where they bought the Maurer Co. in 1900. They carried on there until 1944, where their house brands were Maurer, Euphonon and Prairie State, and they built for catalogue companies like Stahl and Co. Stahl's custom order guitars were stamped with his brand on the backstrip and almost all of Stahl's late 20s guitars were made by the Larson Brothers, including this example. At this point in time, a catalogue company was not what we think of today. The guitars built by the Larson Brothers for Stahl and Co. were revolutionary in their designs and construction – top shelf stuff.

The Style 6 is a 000 body style having a 15 1/4" bottom bout with a shallower body depth (3 3/8") than a Martin 000. Slim and sleek, the rims and back are of solid, beautifully grained Brazilian rosewood and the top is a solid piece of Adirondack spruce. The body and neck are bound in white with multi-coloured purfling in a dot-dash pattern of great detail and quality at the body edges, the soundhole and as a backstrip. The ebony fingerboard and bridge are both inlaid with large snowflake and dot designs. The crispness and detail of the bridge design is a pure delight, retaining the original bridge pins with their trademark backward slant, a characteristic of the Larsons' work. The tail of the fingerboard is thicker than the side binding, which gives the effect of black, white and black... dramatic and stylish. The tuners are French polished steel and the peghead is veneered in a holly-type wood that seems to have originally been stained an ivy green and has now faded to a more brown tone. Graduated dot and snowflake inlays complete the slot peghead. Overall, the guitar is made with an attention to detail even C.F Martin & Co. would envy. It's as much a work of art as it is a musical instrument.

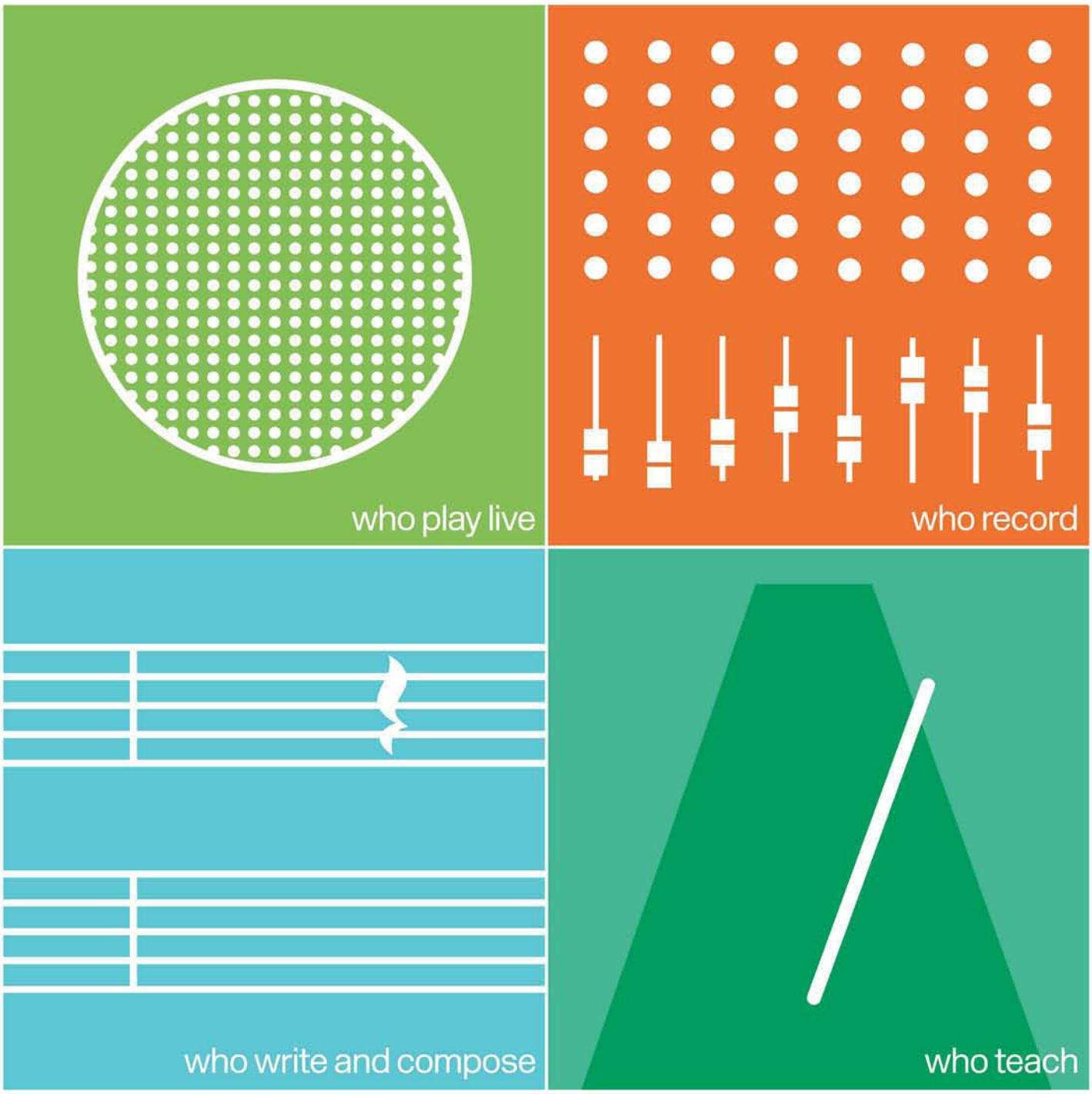
"Tonally, it's amazing. Not huge, but sublime, with subtleties rarely heard in any guitar"

Now for the inside: what a delight. The Larson Brothers used steel string X-bracing long before C.F Martin & Co., and this example is sublime in its interior appointments. All the vertical elements inside are extremely thin and tall with a thin, maple rectangular bridge plate. The X-bracing is set back and built as a laminate with Brazilian rosewood as the core material sandwiched between two bits of spruce. What an amazing concept! As a result, the top is perfectly flat with no stress deflection or cracks.

The neck is a modified V with a 1 3/4" nut: a fingerpicker's dream. Tonally, the guitar is simply amazing. Not huge, but sublime, with subtleties rarely heard in any guitar. Piquant is the word here: articulate, crisp and responsive. Warm haunting backtones with the typical 000 projection give it a mature tonal image.

The Larsons brought to the plate innovations you wouldn't see anywhere else at that time or since: true innovators! ■

For all musicians



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PAUL TASKER

STYLE… (INSTRUMENTAL FOLK)

I'm a performer and guitar teacher based in Glasgow. I've played with my band Doghouse Roses since 2005, but we've taken a sabbatical over the last couple of years, which has given me the chance to focus more on my solo instrumental guitar and banjo music. My first solo album, *Cold Weather Music*, came together over a number of years. Several of the pieces were written while I was thinking back on big personal events. Others, like 'Husker's Theme', were written from a series of photographs and an imagined narrative. I think 'Tundra Plane' is probably my favourite. It really took shape when I made a mistake recording an early demo of the tune, but it was the twist the melody needed. On the final version there's some great playing by Thomas Marsden on Weissenborn lap slide guitar. My own acoustic guitar is a Lowden 010 with a cedar top and mahogany back and sides. It's an acoustic jumbo I bought new in 1998 and then had a Fishman Blend pickup fitted. It's a really versatile guitar that's equally at home with plectrum or fingerstyle playing. My solo stuff is pretty much all fingerstyle, but when playing with other people I mostly use plectrum and fingers, which I find slightly more versatile. When performing, I use either a BBE Acoustimax DI or a Fishman G II preamp and DI through the PA. My banjo is a Gold Tone OT-800. It has a tubaphone-style tone ring that gives more sustain than other types of tone ring. It's a frailing banjo with a scoop above the 15th fret. Doghouse Roses are currently completing a new album for release later this year. We'll be opening for Television at the O2 ABC Glasgow in June, then playing the Star Folk Club there in July. I'm also in a new four-piece vocal harmonies band called Colour of Whisky, and I'm planning to record some instrumentals with Slovenian guitarist/producer Dejan Lapanja.

www.paultaskermusic.com

CLAIRE HASTINGS

STYLE… (FOLK/POP)

Originally from Dumfries, Scotland, but now based in Glasgow, I'm a singer-songwriter and ukulele player. My love of folk music came when I was in school, and in 2011 I graduated with a first-class honours degree in Scottish music from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The title of my debut album, *Between River And Railway*, is taken from the lyric of the opening track, 'The House At Rosehill'. It's about the house I grew up in, which is located between the river Nith and the Carlisle to Glasgow railway line. I wrote it while I was travelling in Australia. My parents were moving out of the house while I was away and I wanted to write a song that included some of my memories. The album is a mixture of traditional and self-penned material, which feels quite natural for me, as I think my songwriting style is quite folky. I think there's a good mix of material and moods, everyone who worked on it with me did an incredible job, and I'm happy with how it's turned out. I currently play an Ashbury AU-80 electro tenor ukulele with a curly koa body and abalone rosette. It has a UK-2000 pickup that I DI via the PA. It has a lovely mellow sound and I don't bother with any FX pedals. I used to play a concert-size ukulele, but now prefer the larger tenor size, playing mainly fingerstyle. As I'm primarily a singer, I'm happy with a mid-range instrument that complements my voice. Since winning BBC Radio Scotland's Young Traditional Musician of the Year award last year, I've performed at many events including BBC Proms in the Park with the Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and BBC Music Day alongside Lulu, Jamie Cullum and Deacon Blue. At the moment, though, promoting the album is my main focus, with the launch tour going until the end of June. I also have a few festivals lined up, including Shepley, Perth, Stonehaven, Colonsay and Southdowns.

www.clairehastings.com

ROB LEAR

STYLE… (AMERICANA/FOLK/POP)

I come from a small mining village in South Wales and I'm currently writing about the sights and sounds I remember – the pit siren three times a day and the coal train rattling past behind my parents' house. I believe in the magic of songwriting, and I'm addicted to writing songs with my band – an eclectic mix of instrumentalists including Van Morrison bassist Pete Hurley, African rhythm student Liz Mullins, country guitarist Brett Green and Baka Beyond's drummer Tim Robinson. The inspiration for my second album, *Motorcycle Heart*, came when I was looking through my dad's old garage. I am a biker myself – I own a Ducati Monster – and I realised that most of the people I admire ride motorcycles too. The songs tell their stories. 'Elfinman''s lyric is about the advice a person gives their daughter who's emigrating, and 'Beseeched' has a verse about Annie May, an embittered A&R scout who found her true calling when she invested in a Harley. My main instruments are two natural Freshman FA400DCEs re-fitted with under-saddle LR Baggs pickups and played through an AER Compact 60 amp. They're bulletproof guitars that I've hammered live and they've never let me down. I also have a Hudson ukulele and a modified Yamaha APXT2 guitar. I usually play fingerstyle at home and pick live – just to cut through – but that's changing with the better gigs and shows we're now able to play. Alternate tunings? Yes, I have sawn-off capos that I move around the fretboard, sometimes using three at once, which replaces the need to detune the heads. As well as the capos and drop Ds top and bottom, I also use DADEAD permanently on one guitar. Future plans? A home gig in Blackwood, then the Hay Festival in June, the Village Pump Folk Festival in July and Priston Festival, interspersed with more intimate shows.

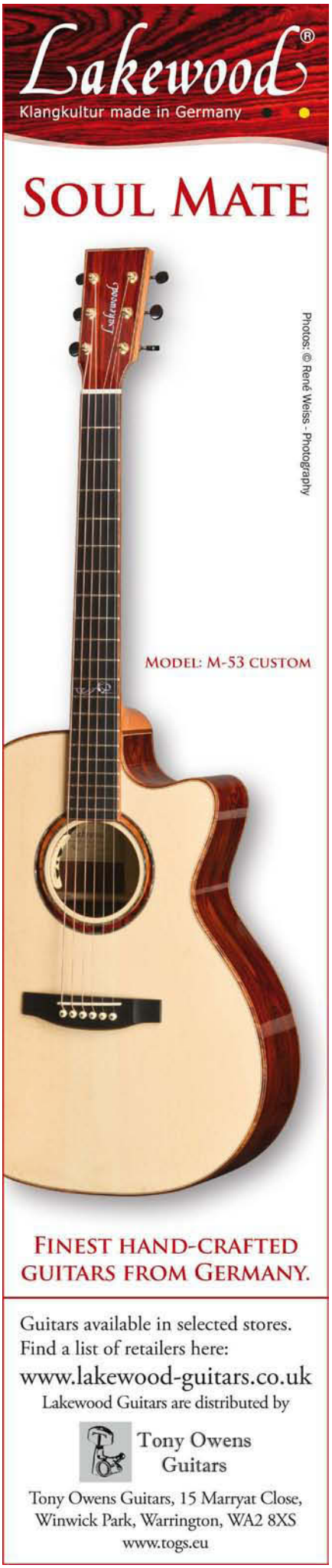
http://roblearmusic.com

SUSANNA ROSE

STYLE… (CONTEMPORARY FOLK)

I'm a songstress in Rochester, New York. While studying abroad in London, a friend started teaching me guitar, and when I got home I learned more from YouTube videos and other friends. I've also taken a few lessons here and there. In 2009, I wrote and recorded my first album *The Wishing Well*. I'd only been playing guitar for a year and I handed it out for free in brown paper bags at a house show. The winter of 2015 was the coldest in Rochester's recorded history – months and months of freezing cold, huge dumps of snow. I spent the winter in my apartment while the snow fell, cosily writing songs. That turned into my new album, *Snowbound*. It's a definite progression from *The Wishing Well*, and I'm pleased with it. My favourite track is 'Working Girl' because of my friend Gabe Schliffer's incredible haunting violin and cello melodies. I used to try to write songs for piano, but didn't enjoy it as much. Just by playing a chord on a guitar I can feel immediately inspired by that full ringing tone. My regular guitar is a medium-sized, steel-strung Cordoba acoustic, made of rosewood, which I DI via PA. I bought it last spring when my old guitar was finally warped beyond repair, and it's now like my baby. I love it because it has a deeper, mellower sound than many acoustics, but also because it's the first guitar I bought for myself. I mostly play fingerstyle, but sometimes I use a pick. Back in London when I was learning guitar, a friend told me that to write a song all you need are 'some words that rhyme' and 'two or three chords.' I do that and something mystical happens. My future plans include a new album – I already have plenty of material – and I'd like to re-record *The Wishing Well* professionally and release that. The secret of good playing? Don't just 'play it like you mean it'. Mean it.

www.susannarose.com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THE WESTIES
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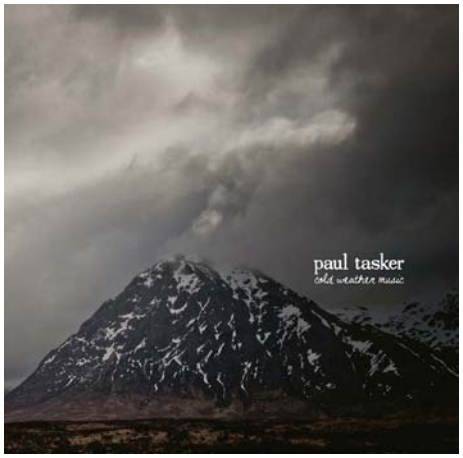
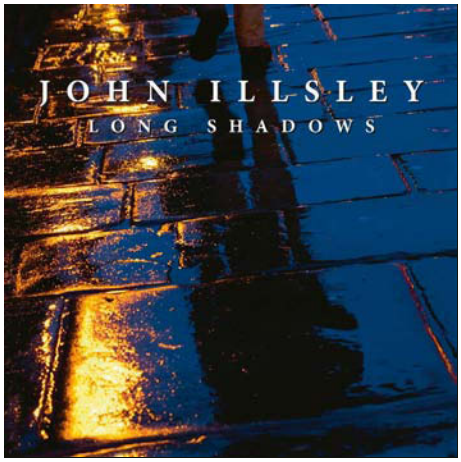
The Westies are Chicago-based husband and wife duo, Michael McDermott and Heather Horton. They instantly draw you in with the ethereal acoustic guitar intro to 'If I Had A Gun', but it's only when the vocals kick in, Michael wishing to 'put one right between his eyes', that the enormity of this album dawns. With tales of lost souls, dope addicts and orphan hell, this is no easy ride – that said it is a fine album. McDermott, who sounds uncannily like a dispossessed Springsteen on the gentle 'Parolee', is a portrait of how Bruce might have turned out if he'd spent another decade on the streets. **JP**



PAUL TASKER
COLD WEATHER MUSIC
WWW.PAULTASKERMUSIC.COM

No easy thing to record an instrumental album, but the stunning mountain images on the sleeve of this album complement the apparently limitless range of this Glaswegian guitarist. Steeped in the fine traditions laid down by Jansch and Fahey, there's much to marvel at. Hints of Celtic mist invade his slide guitar led 'Valve Oil', the melancholic 'Blooms In The Autumn' is scattered with mind-boggling chord progressions worthy of John Renbourn, while the creaking banjo on 'Tundra Plane' recalls Appalachia over Aberdeen. A string of beautifully muted tunes and arrangements, make this a weather-beaten but exhilarating ride. **JP**



JOHN ILLSLEY
LONG SHADOWS
WWW.JOHNILLSLEY.COM

'You can't shake the monkey on your back', John Illsley sings on 'Ship Of Fools', and when you've been a founding member of a stellar band – in Illsley's case Dire Straits – the musical afterburn is not always easy. But as this is John's sixth album, creativity is clearly not a problem. With suitably spiky guitar fills from Robbie MacIntosh, 'In The Darkness' is one of those mid-tempo stadium plods that the Straits did so well, his husky vocals throughout eerily reminiscent of his old boss. One of those albums that floats effortlessly from track to track, immaculately played and produced, *Long Shadows* is unlikely to kick up much sand but if you liked Dire Straits, this is for you. **JP**

JAMES J TURNER
SPIRIT, SOUL & A HANDFUL OF MUD
WWW.JAMESTURNER.COM

It's difficult to imagine the acoustic pagan music scene, but like all minority genres, it's probably not a bad one to try and shine in. James has apparently 'deliberated to consciously follow a Druidic-Bardic' path. But we're interested in the music, and James's spirited performances on songs like the driving 'Come With Me', accompanied by scything cello and fiddle, recall the Levellers; great music to jump about to after a few noggins. Things get a bit serious with 'Karma Will Track You Down', a scary hymn to doing the right thing, but with its energy and clear commitment to his faith, this is an intriguing release, and some seriously great songs. **JP**

GREG RUSSELL & CIARAN ALGAR

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WWW.RUSSELLALGAR.CO.UK

The third studio album from two-time BBC Radio 2 Folk Award winners Russell & Algar, finds them once again plundering a shed load of traditional tunes, dovetailed with a clutch of their own. And it says much for the degree to which they're steeped in the muse that a self-penned jig like 'The Intruder', sits seamlessly alongside the other material. All power to their collective elbows that they don't shirk from some political fiddle rattling too, with the flagrantly contentious nineteenth century ballad 'We Must Be Contented', a title that says it all. **JP**

JACK CONMAN

EUPHORIA SPRINGS

WWW.JACKCONMAN.CO.UK

Bon Iver has a lot to answer for, but when an album comes along that genuinely tugs those old heartstrings, it's both a joy and a relief. The debut recordings from Yorkshireman Jack Conran find him exploring the darker side of the human condition, his percussive guitar well to the fore as he drips his soulful vocals around songs like the hypnotic 'Misty Central'. But he pulls it off, the six tracks a delight, with skillfully arranged minimal backing that decorates his songs rather than overwhelming the text – the light and shade enhancing the tension in these six lonely epics. This guy could be a contender. **JP**

DARRELL SCOTT

COUCHVILLE SESSIONS

WWW.DARRELLSCOTT.COM

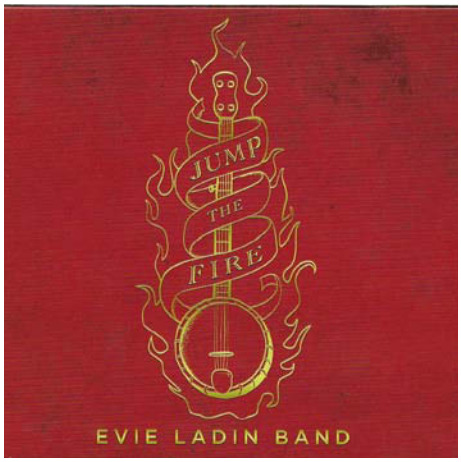
He played stage right with Robert Plant for two years, is revered by peers like Steve Earle and Emmy Lou Harris, but mention multi-instrumentalist, singer-songwriter Darrell Scott's name, and the odds are that most folks will still look blank. Funny thing, this music business. But let's cut to the chase, this collection of 15 songs, are mostly Darrell's own, but Hank Williams' spooky 'Ramblin' Man' features alongside Townes Van Zandt's 'Loretta' and James Taylor's 'Another Grey Morning'. Recorded in 2001 with an all star cast, it's no empty boast to suggest that if Americana's your bag, then grab this one, because it's as good as it gets. **JP**

SAMANTHA LLOYD

NOW THAT YOU'RE GONE

WWW.SAMANTHALLOYDMUSIC.COM

You don't think of Stoke-on-Trent as being a hotbed for country music, but listen to Samantha Lloyd sing 'Goodbye Lullaby' and it's Taylor Swift that comes to mind, rather than the potteries. Backed up by some great, empathetic musicians – Scott Poley's dobro and pedal steel playing hits the note every time – Samantha works her way through six of her own compositions. Highlights of the album include the haunting 'Cinderella Story', a song packed with rolling emotions and windblown pedal steel, creating a fine backdrop for Samantha's beautiful, love-weary voice, and the jumping Dolly Parton-like 'Everybody Can't Be Wrong'. **JP**

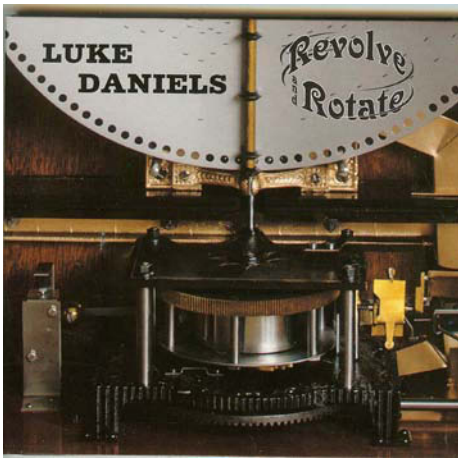


EVIE LADIN BAND

JUMP THE FIRE

WWW.EVIELADIN.COM

Evie Ladin, a clawhammer banjo player from Oakland, CA, apparently slunk off into a damp cabin in the woods with nothing but her instruments and a wood stove for company to write this album. And the deprivation sounds as though it was worthwhile. It's no easy task to be original within the confines of the Appalachian mindset, but these guys just broke down the walls. From the stops and percussive breaks on 'Coo Coo', the slow haunting 'Two = 3', the jazz slur of 'Have It All', the bopping western swing of 'Drinking About You', one gem just follows another. It's all superlative stuff and Ladin's feisty, breathy vocals will have you tossin' and turnin' all night. **JP**



LUKE DANIELS

REVOLVE AND ROTATE

WWW.LUKEDANIELSMUSIC.COM

Luke's a respected melodeon, guitar and piano player, who's restored a Polyphon, a large 19th century mechanical German music box, and somehow developed a computer program to cut new discs. It is, at first sight, a little wacky but the results are impressive. Luke sings with one of those reedy, resonant folk voices, and on 'Three Servants', accompanying himself on guitar, sounds uncannily like Nic Jones. The plot thickens when the Polyphon supplies a twinkling backing on the beautiful 'Canadee I O'. The Polyphon doesn't quite steal the show, but on the beautifully bewitching title track, the notes ringing as if suspended on invisible silken chord, it comes near to it. **JP**

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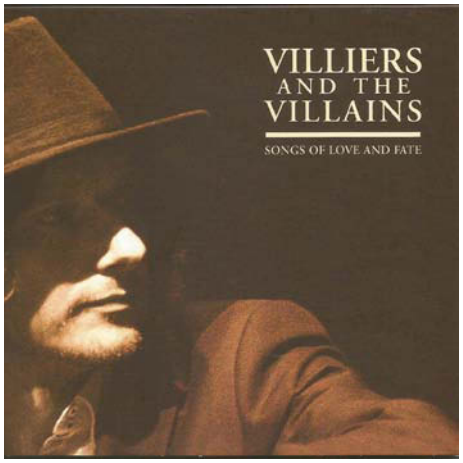
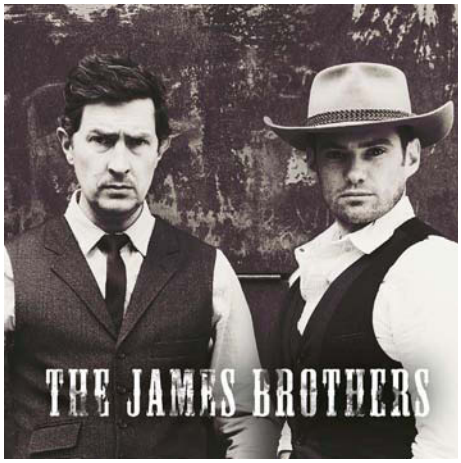


VILLIERS AND THE VILLAINS
SONGS OF LOVE AND FATE
WWW.TONYVILLIERS.COM

There's a great live feel to this rambunctious album by Armagh singer Tony Villiers, the easy going chugging vibe conjuring up visions of Bob Dylan with a shot of Peter Case. Heck, he even drawls 'eyes' into 'eyyyyyes' on 'Rock Salt" before breaking off for a rasping, wheezy harmonica break. But everyone's obviously having fun, and when Paul Gurney's boogie piano or Paul Meehan's guitar break into the mix, the guys are playing with the kind of intensity that only happens when everyone's having a ball. Tony Villiers and his renegades score ten out of ten for ripping it up. **JP**



THE JAMES BROTHERS
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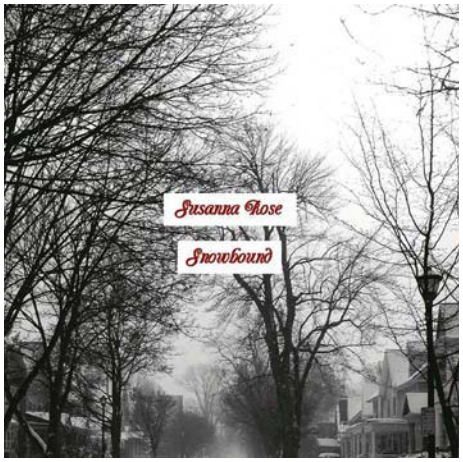
WWW.THEJAMESBROTHERS.CO.UK

Moonlighting from their marital musical careers – James Fagan plays guitar and bouzouki with his other half Nancy Kerr, whilst fiddler Jamie McClennan is hitched to Emily Smith – these guys share a common antipodean heritage. So it's appropriate that they draw from the songs that inspired them 'down under'. 'Voyage Of The Buffalo' is a jaunty ballad about the vagaries of life on a convict ship transporting timber, and it's no surprise that Ned Kelly makes a showing on a gloomy ballad by Trevor Lucas. But other choices of material – 'Six Months In A Leaky Boat' by Split Enz and 'Hey Rain' a country sounding hoedown bemoaning the fact that there's 'a crocodile livin' in me fridge'– put them in a field of one. **JP**

COLVIN & EARLE
COLVIN & EARLE
WWW.SHAWNCOLVIN.COM

Shawn Colvin and Steve Earle go back a long way – 30 years in fact. So it stands to reason that the idea of hunkering these two old friends down in Buddy Miller's home studio was destined to be a productive one. For the most part as you'd expect, it's a smooth blast of rootsy country folk, but the choice of material – like Earle's career – does take some unusual twists. J. D Loudermilk's stomping 'Tobacco Road' receives a spirited reading, as does the Stones' 'Ruby Tuesday', but the guys sound more at ease when Earle's whiskey soaked voice takes the lead on 'The Way That We Do', or when they're on familiar territory with Emmy Lou Harris's 'Raise The Dead'. **JP**



SUSANNA ROSE
SNOWBOUND
WWW.SUSANNAROSE.COM

Inspiration can strike unexpected ways, and the coldest winter ever recorded in Rochester, NY provided the catalyst for Susanna Rose's first album. And like the drifting snow that enveloped her home, her songs float along, unthreatening but almost claustrophobic in their gentle intensity. Based around Susanna's light acoustic guitar, these are tales of broken hearts and almost inevitably, romantic implosion. Sensitively produced it's hardly an uplifting experience, but that said, the Rose has a sweet voice and there's an endearing honesty that should make this a hit in troubled bedsits throughout the land. **JP**

MEGSON
GOOD TIMES WILL COME AGAIN
WWW.MEGSONMUSIC.CO.UK

Put together a punk musician and a classically trained singer and it should be no surprise that the husband and wife team of Stu and Debbie Hanna are one of the most idiosyncratic and interesting duos on the folk scene. Kicking off with 'Generation Rent', a song driven by Stu's chiming mandola, Megson spell out the iniquities of the generation that 'have still got nowt' despite 'working every hour of the week to the boss man's beat.' A great song in a set that includes 'Burn Away', a heartfelt plea for the local Teeside steel industry. This is folk music how it should be: relevant, thought provoking songs that would make Woody Guthrie proud. **JP**

SARAH JAROSZ
UNDERCURRENT
WWW.SARAHJAROSZ.COM

She may not be quite the newcomer on the block anymore – her first album was released in 2009 – but there's still a freshness about this Austin, Texas virtuoso's work, that instantly commands attention. Eschewing the complex arrangements that have been the hallmark of earlier albums, Sarah's, gorgeous ethereal vocals float over just her throbbing acoustic guitar as she lays her soul bare on 'Early Morning Light' and 'Everything To Hide'. She's joined by double bass and Luke Reynold's guitar on the ghostly 'House Of Mercy', minimal Hammond on the funky 'Comin' Undone', but ultimately it's the intimacy of the songs that wins through every time. **JP**

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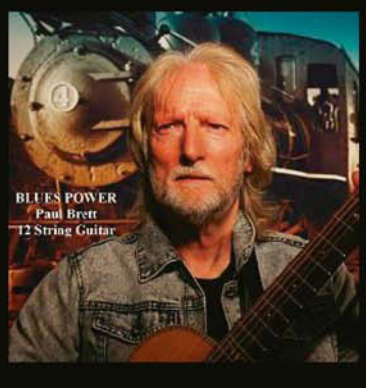

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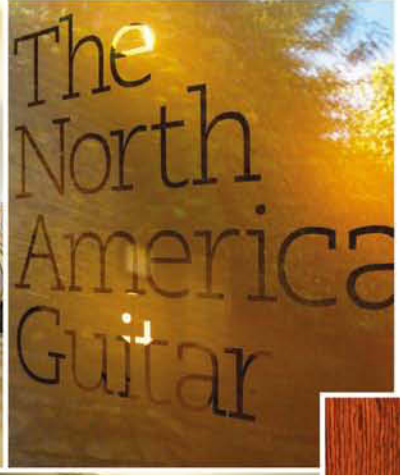

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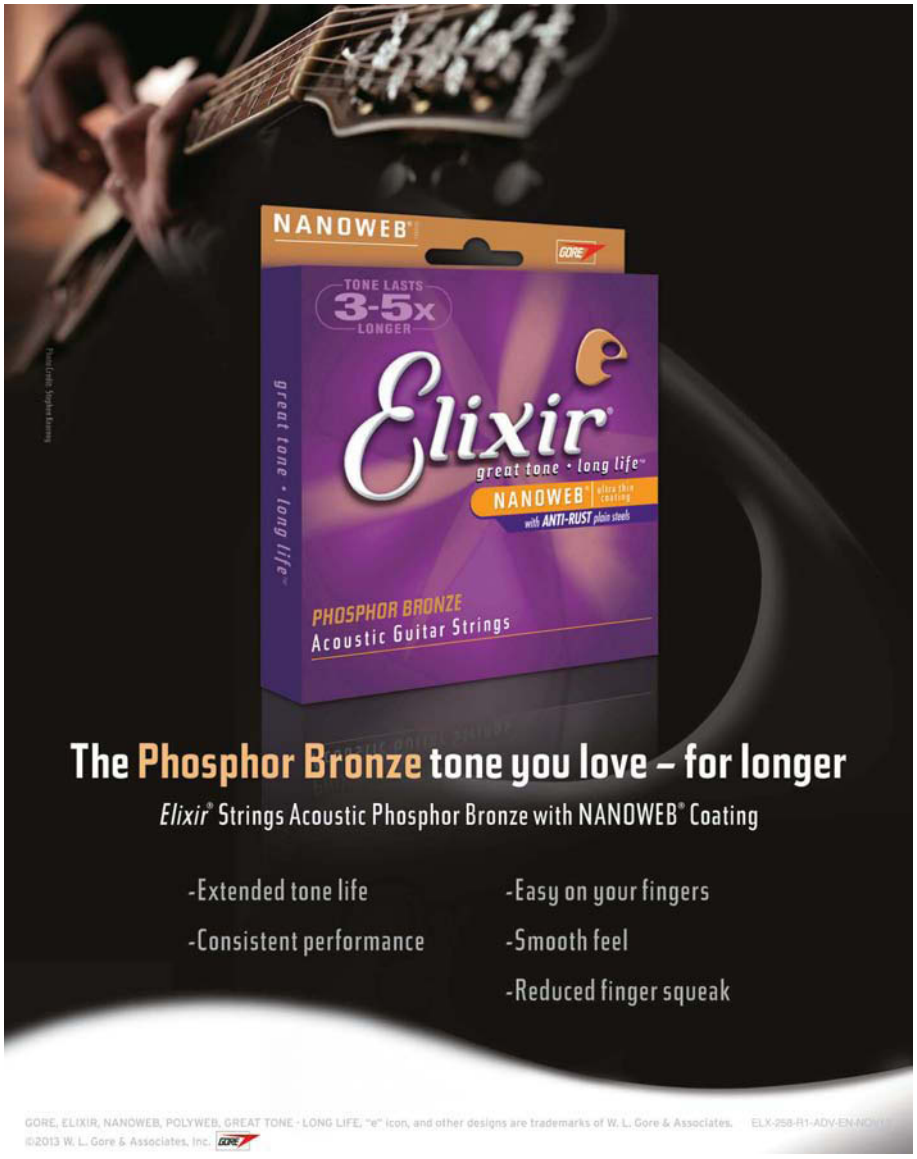
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GORDON GILTRAP INSTRUMENTAL ARTIST

'A TAPESTRY OF TEARS'

Gordon Giltrap offers up a piece in the style of John Dowland

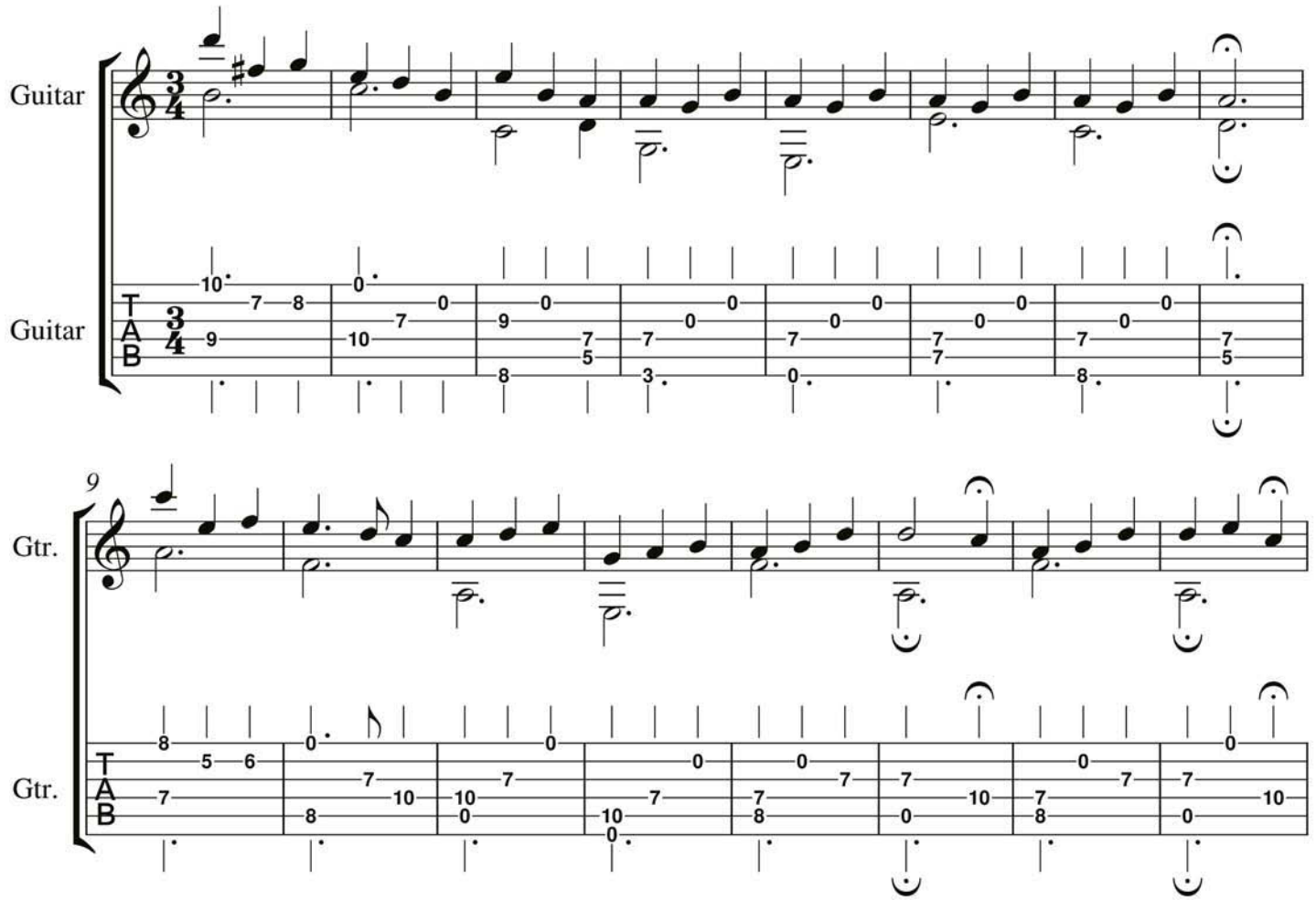
FULL TAB ONLINE

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

A few years ago my publisher was putting together an album of early music and asked whether I could write something with a similar feel. I decided to write something that I felt could have been played on a lute (but not the same tuning) in the melancholic style of John Dowland. Of course, this isn't in the same league as the work of the great man himself, but somehow I like to think I captured something here.

Anyway I recorded it for the album, included it on the *Shining Morn* album and moved on to the next piece. It was only recently that it was brought to my attention by a man who dedicated the piece to the memory of a close friend. It occurred to me that the piece had more emotion and depth than I truly realised while composing it. I knew it had a profound sadness to it and much of the

'A TAPESTRY OF TEARS' – GORDON GILTRAP



performance is highlighted in the expression that is placed within certain bars. I have never performed it live – why, I don't know!

My transcriber Chris Dumigan informed me that these expressions are marked clearly in the music and are called *fermate* (the eye-like dotted symbols, also known as a hold pause, a birdseye or cyclops eye), which indicate that you should hold on a note for an unspecified length of time. This in itself creates natural pauses within the piece, so do make a note of where they are.

Many of these are of course repeated sections from earlier on and are purely optional, but they do allow a degree of breathing space between some of the sections, and does give the piece the expression it needs.

I would also like to quickly point out a few bars that need to be looked at: bar four has quite a long stretch with the seventh fret, fourth string and third fret, sixth string.

In bar 29 there is quite a jump up from the previous bars' arpeggio. We then move on to bar 40 where a barre shape is required and is repeated again in bar 79.

In bar 45 do make sure to observe the relatively long stretch that is present here.

So that sums up this rather melancholic piece with a title to match.

Thanks, as usual, must go to Chris Dumigan for his superb transcription. This month's piece is taken from my *Shining Morn* album and anyone who wants to hear how the original sounds can find the track and the album on iTunes. ■

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CHRIS GIBBONS COMPOSER

THE COUNTRY BALLAD

Chris Gibbons introduces us to the 12/8 country ballad

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

This issue, we continue with our series of lessons on country guitar, and styles derived from them. The country ballad has a slower tempo than previous styles in this series but needs more dexterity due to the manner in which the notes are distributed throughout the bar.

We are looking at 12/8 time. There are four main pulses to the bar as before, but in this instance, each pulse is divided into three, the accent falling on the first note of each group of three. We can count this rhythm out like so: 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a.

To execute this we need to look at both plectrum and fingerstyle methods. Typically with a plectrum, one is recommended to develop 'alternate picking', where alternate down and up strokes are used in a passage of notes for speed and consistency of timbre.

In **example 1** we have a simple C major chord, picked in an arpeggio style in 12/8 time, starting with a down pick (the little inverted 'U' symbol) and then an up pick (the arrow symbol), alternating throughout as per normal convention.

However, it's desirable to keep the pick moving in one direction as you move across the strings: down picks from low to high, and up picks coming back across the strings. This gives a much smoother and more fluid sound to your playing.

This is demonstrated in **example 2**. You'll notice that the first four notes are taken with a down pick, the hand moving smoothly across the strings, and then reversing direction for two notes coming back down the chord.

In **example 3** we reverse the pick direction after three notes – the ascending arpeggio

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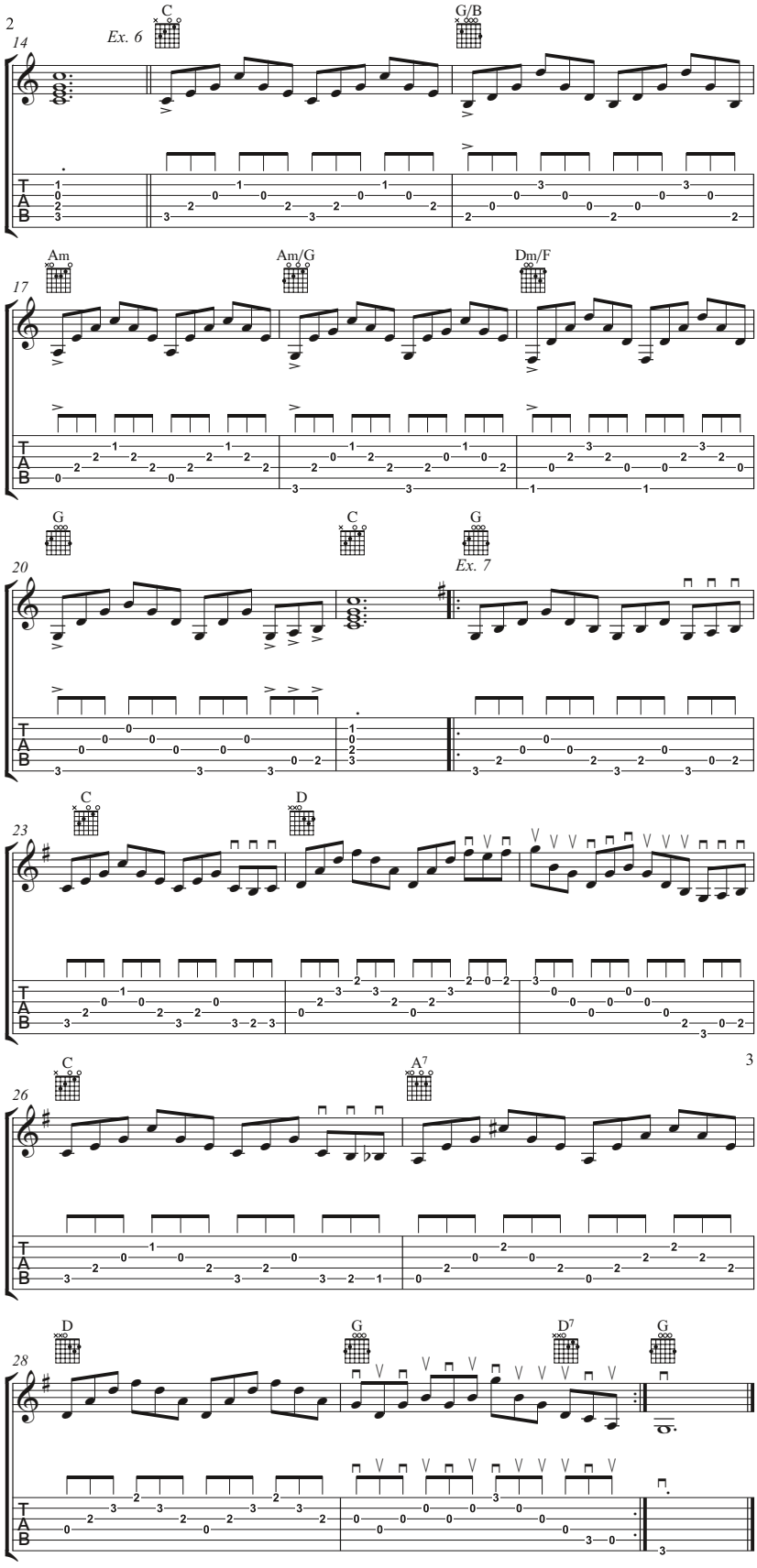

should be taken with a down stroke and the descending with an up stroke. There are no hard and fast rules here, it is very much a matter of personal taste, but I find that **example 2** works better for slower tempos and **example 3** better for faster songs.

Finally in **example 4** we have the logical fingerstyle pattern of *p i m a m i* to cover the arpeggio. For the remaining examples I have only included the right-hand fingering or picking where I suggest a certain routine would be preferred.

Example 5 is a simple C/Am/Dm/G chord sequence played in the same arpeggio style as the previous examples. Try to maintain an evenness of tone and don't let your fingers mute the adjacent strings when chording with the left hand; we want to hear the strings ringing as much as possible. You need to play this slowly at first, concentrating on accurate left-hand fingering.

In **example 6** we take the example one step further. To add interest to the chord sequence we add a melody to the bass, known as a descending bass-line. We rearrange the chord voicing here and there to create an attractive movement in the bass from one chord to the next. Starting with a C chord, we move to a G chord but with the notes so arranged to produce a B in the bass. This continues down the scale to A for the A minor chord, then a G under the A minor and an F under the D minor chord. Finally we have a neat scale run from the G back up to C on the last three notes.

For **example 7**, I'm going to use some of the devices we explored in the previous articles on flatpicking, including the use of scale type runs and fills to connect chords within a song.

We'll change the key here to G, so the fingering you have already used in previous lessons will be familiar. Throughout the piece, seek to maintain that smooth 12/8 rhythmic pulse and sustain from the strings.

Also try to pay careful attention to the picking format for the connecting phrases, which are mainly all down picks for emphasis, the exception being bar 29 where we use common alternate picking and a succession of down picks as we descend through the G arpeggio.

See you next time! ■

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CARL ORR PRESENTED BY... ROCKSCHOOL

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FULL TAB ONLINE

'THE BOXER'

Carl Orr presents a song with a harmonic rhythm that will keep you guessing

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

'The Boxer' is regarded by many as Simon and Garfunkel's finest song and is from their classic *Bridge Over Troubled Waters* (1970) album. It famously took over 100 hours to record and was recorded in at least four different locations including Columbia's studios in New York and Nashville. The guitar parts were played by Paul Simon and Nashville studio ace Fred Carter Jr, who performed the one-of-a-kind cascading phrase at the beginning of the song. This arrangement is a combination of the most prominent parts of the twin guitars of Simon and Carter.

The song starts with the notes of a C9th chord tumbling around in an unpredictable ascending arpeggio revolving around the open high E string in bar one and the open G string (after an abrupt position shift) in bar two. This will take some time to play smoothly, so be patient. From the nifty, Travis-picked C chord in bars three and four onwards, down stem notes should be played with the thumb and up stem notes with one finger per string: index finger (*i*) on the G string, second finger (*m*) on the B string and third finger (*a*) on the high E string.

At the start of the verse in bar five, there is a different pattern on the C major chord, featuring a hammer-on on the D string on the third beat.

There are a few different fingerpicking patterns in this so it is important to master each one. Some of the picking patterns recur at different points of the song, most notably the pattern in bar eight (A minor) which recurs in bars 16–20.

SONGWRITING INSPIRATION

Lyrically, 'The Boxer' is autobiographical, hinting at Paul Simon's personal pain at being criticised by the music press. One of the points of interest in the song is its wildly unpredictable form.The verse starts with three bars of C major (with a passing chord of G/B), one bar of A minor, followed by four bars of G major, three bars of C major (with that passing chord again), one bar each of A minor and G, two bars of F/C, one bar each of C, G and F/C, finishing with two bars of C.

ARRANGEMENT

As you can see, the harmonic rhythm varies a lot, in an unpredictable way, so you can never tell what chord is coming next, or even when the chord change is going to happen – an excellent way to keep the listener interested.

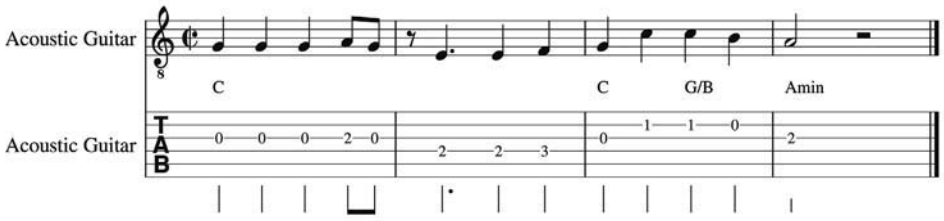
There are no drum fills or other indicators to define the beginning and end of each phrase so I interpret them this way, based on where the phrases of the melody start and finish:

Bars one to four (four bars)
Bars five to eight (four bars)
Bars nine to 16 (eight bars)
Bars 17 to 19 (three bars)
Bars 20 to 24 (five bars)

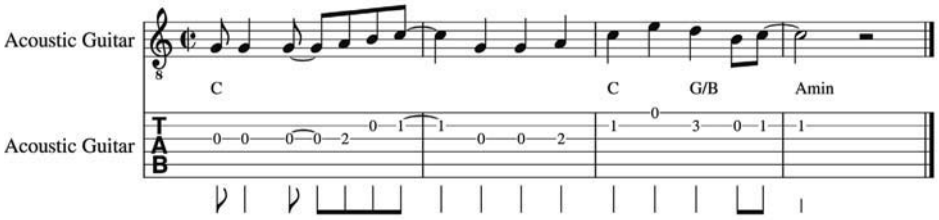
SOLOING

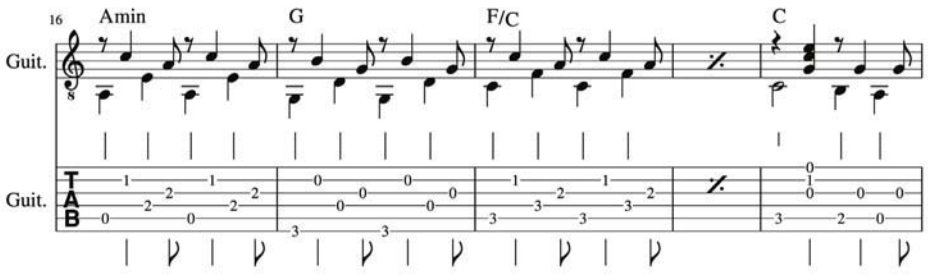
Naturally, soloing over this song is difficult, and I have found that it's best to compose a solo, rather than improvising one, as the strange harmonic rhythm and form make it hard to spontaneously create phrases that make sense.

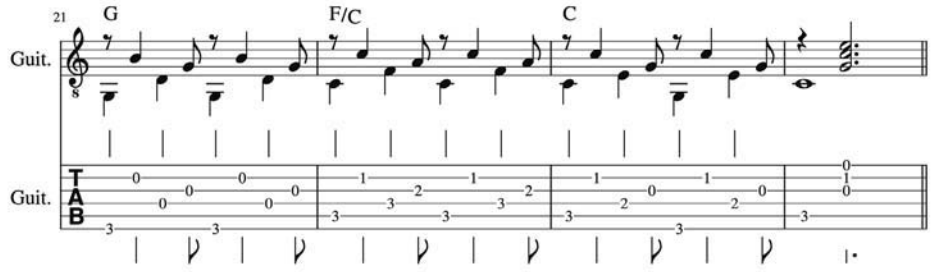
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2







When I was thinking about how to approach soloing over this song, I remembered seeing a picture of Paul Simon with Miles Davis at some kind of event, and it made me realise that Miles Davis' trumpet style, when he played quietly with a Harmon mute, has a similar quality to Paul Simon's singing, an intimate, storytelling quality, unforced and not in a rush, but patiently letting the story unfold, so I thought I would emulate Miles Davis' intimate and melodic improvisational style as a starting point for the solo.

EXAMPLE 1

I have commenced my solo (starting at bar five, after the intro) with a phrase that fits in the same 'space' as the original melody. To do this, I have written out the melody to this section and marked the starting and finishing points of the phrase.

EXAMPLE 2

Then I wrote out the rest of the melody and applied the same approach of marking the starting and finishing points of each phrase and then composing solo phrases that fit in the same space. This takes a lot of time, but it's an excellent way of forcing yourself to do something other than the usual stuff you always play in your solos. You can see the whole solo online at *www.acousticmagazine.com*

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RICHARD GILEWITZ FINGERSTYLE GUITARIST

‘FUCHSIA CIRCLE NORTH’

Richard Gilewitz puts us in the pocket and takes us on a groove ride

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

More often than not, the challenge of fingerpicking a guitar, along with an attempt to create a valid instrumental piece, can be quite a daunting task, especially if your goal is to avoid something that is either too derivative of something you’ve heard before or created in the past.

The more experienced you become as a player the more likely you will realise that you have already explored a vast landscape of material involving various rhythms, accents and melodies using a simple batch of picking patterns.

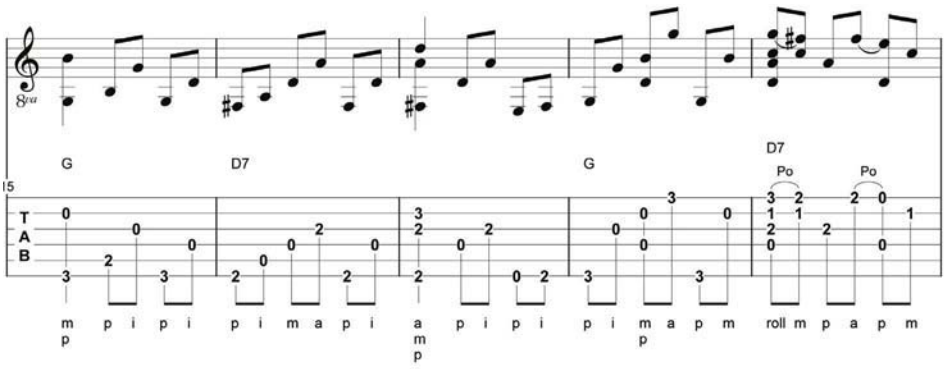
It’s easy enough to change your tempo, select or fall into a particular groove, adjust your chord sequences or seek out a melody. The hard part is coming upon something unique. The land of the derivative is a vast and annoying one.

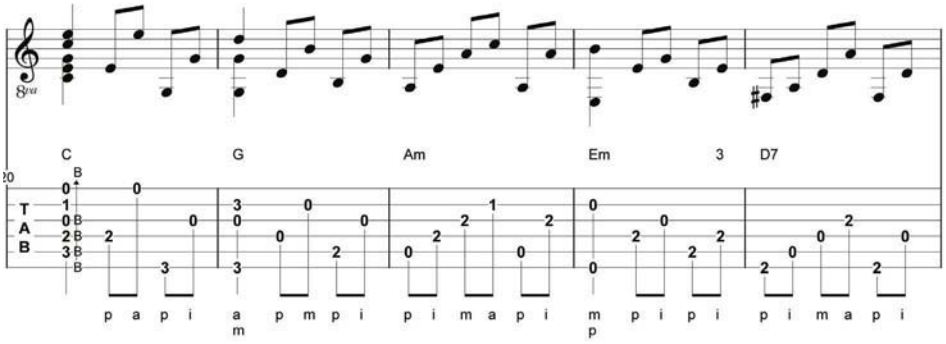
Some of the best and most creative players I know have admitted one particular item of commonality. It is embracing the willingness to wait, play and simply disconnect from their environment. Too often there is some sort of inconvenience, major or minor, just as inspiration takes over. I’ve had the pleasure of disconnecting and falling deeply into that creative world – it’s an interesting happening.

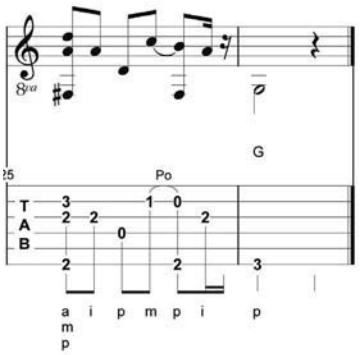
The best way I can explain this phenomenon is to relay my own experiences of playing through existing tunes, working on a part of a tune, noodling around mindlessly making things up and then drifting off to arrive somewhere remote on Planet Richard. And, if I am lucky, some cool little rhythm, riff or melody will protrude and wake me up from my trance like a musical alarm clock. If I go with what pops up I can remain on that planet, but still be conscious enough to start working with that riff, nugget or motif in real time.

‘FUCHSIA CIRCLE NORTH’ – RICHARD GILEWITZ

But then life takes over and just as I get to nugget point I realise I have to get to sleep so I can catch a plane, or I need to get to a show or meet someone. Rarely there







seems to be enough space in my day when I can simply have the time to investigate further and sift through the planet dust for something wickedly unique and cool.

I've included in this article something I began working on a few years ago when I was in Australia. It was actually fun to play right from the start. But it was somewhat of a challenge to get all of the picking hand positions shifted to what the piece required, along with a resistance to rush or push the tune along. Now it feels best when it sits right in the pocket. I would strongly suggest that if you choose to give this one a whirl, give each bar time to submerge deeply into your head and fingers. Eventually you should begin to feel the groove carrying you along with it.

I will provide a few tips here for you that are worth considering as you let the tune sink into your fingers. This is just a front-end fragment of about a 165-bar tune that's still being built in my head.

Pay close attention to the precise picking hand fingers I've selected. I spent quite a bit of time deciding which of a few choices felt best as I let the tune ride along. You will notice that I have often picked the index finger to simulate a flat pick (or plectrum) as it plays against the previous striking thumb on the first two notes of the piece.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Throughout the tune I often try to employ what I like to call a position shift with my picking fingers. If they occur in an arpeggio sequence on strings five, four and three I refer to that as position 3. You will be able to see examples of this occur in bars two, three, eight and 10.

Position 2 can be observed as the plucking fingers strike on strings four, three and two, which can be seen in bars six and 14.

Position 1 would obviously be a striking of strings three, two and one, which can be seen in the fashion of a quick sequential arpeggio roll in bar 19.

A shift of the thumb and index plucking fingers from position 1 to 2 can be seen for the first times in bars four and seven as the fingers pluck on strings four and three followed by five and four.

Pinch patterns occur throughout to give somewhat of a welcome break from the constant sounds occurring from plucked strings. That simple quarter note respite can offer exactly what is needed for an accent or break in the action.

You may notice that at the end of bar eight your picking hand winds up in position two with the index striking the fourth string followed by the *m* and *a* fingers pairing up on strings three and two. This set-up allows the fingers to avoid tripping over each other. Perhaps think of a boxer's footwork, as your picking hand needs to achieve and maintain a similar constant balance.

The front end of beats one in both bars 19 and 20 can be created with a brush thumb effect as the thumb drags down in a gentle or aggressive strumming fashion.

Bar 19 allows for an opportunity to create one of the more interesting parts of this little tune with a double pull-off in sequence. You should notice that the picking thumb comes down on string three on beat two, which allows for a continuance of a rhythmic approach. Be sure to strike the second string with your *m*, or middle finger, on the '&' of beat one and avoid rushing either of the pull-offs, which can sometimes simulate grace notes and throw off your timing.

Last, but not least, try to see what you can do to decorate the tune with some subtle vibratos, a dynamic single note or strum strikes and brushes, tone variations with a simple movement of the plucking hand as it moves either toward the bridge or the left of the soundhole.

These are just a few tips to look out for. You might consider using this simple tune as somewhat of a model to explore the positional movements available to the plucking hand. The more control you can exhibit over these three positional ranges, the more likely it is that you can expand your music as a fingerstyle player. Good luck and as always, happy pickin'! ■

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SIMON MAYOR UK MANDOLIN MAESTRO

'HORNPIPE IN E MINOR'

APP EXTRA

Simon Mayor presents an easy-to-follow piece by Purcell

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

At just 24 hours' notice, the mandolin workshop weekend I was meant to host last January was postponed due to a norovirus outbreak at the venue, the otherwise idyllic 15th century Halsway Manor in Somerset. Norovirus aside, it gave rise to symptoms of acute '*mandolinus interruptus*' among the 40 disappointed musicians due to attend and indulge in a weekend of group playing, nerdy chat (why not?) and a little light alcoholic refreshment. As host and tutor, it felt particularly galling as I had put in a lot of preparation arranging tunes in parts, making sure all participants received the music in advance and generally psyching myself up to answer questions on plectrum thicknesses, string gauges, action heights, and performing in the concert with Hilary James on the Saturday night.

'HORNPIPE IN E MINOR' – HARMONY

The 2015 event had been immensely enjoyable despite the sense of responsibility, so I was relieved when the venue suggested we reschedule for Easter weekend, but inevitably some people were not available. We still managed to number over 30, and, as before, the combined forces were sounding like a half-decent mandolin orchestra by the Sunday afternoon. The mandolins were helped by a couple of mandocellos, a *liuto cantabile* (an Italian five course tenor-voiced mandolin) and one participant who had travelled all the way from Belgium with mandolin, mandola and mandocello, and even played mandobass (borrowed from Hilary James) for some of the time. In the end, a great time was had by all, and it's in the diary again for January next year.

One thing that makes me apprehensive about leading such a large group is the wide range of abilities. This was indeed the case; no fewer than six people described themselves as complete beginners and were just about able to run up and down a major scale, read tablature to a speed of one note per bar, all the time still feeling uncomfortable holding a plectrum.

Conversely, there were people already experienced in playing in mandolin orchestras, bluegrass bands, or just very good amateurs. The beginners usually rise to the occasion, surprising themselves at how much they achieve as the weekend progresses. Nevertheless, I took the precaution of including one very easy part in all the tunes I arranged. Hopefully, nobody would feel left out.

So, here is one of the pieces we played arranged as a mandolin duet. The 'Hornpipe in Em' by Henry Purcell demands a certain

"The 'Hornpipe in Em' by Henry Purcell demands a certain level of competence to play the melody, but the harmony line is very simple (thanks, Henry!). And even the melody line falls entirely within first position, so it's not a huge challenge in terms of its execution"

'HORNPIPE IN E MINOR' – MELODY

level of competence to play the melody, but the harmony line is very simple (thanks, Henry!), a slow four notes to the bar with just a couple of quaver passing notes, and as such is a great opportunity for beginner players to join in. So whatever your own ability, play along with the MP3 (available online) and have a go at one or both of the parts.

Even the melody line falls entirely within first position, so it's not a huge challenge in terms of its execution. However, you'll notice that I've placed a little figure four by many of the notes that might otherwise be played on an open string. Try to play these on the seventh fret of the lower string if you can, so an E, for example, would be played on the seventh fret of the second string with the little finger rather than the open first string. Glance at the tablature staff below and the seventh fret is indicated. This helps keep the tone a little more even throughout the piece, and of course is a good workout for the left hand. I've kept the harmony line as simple as possible by not suggesting it there.

Interestingly, Purcell syncopates the rhythm in many places, making it a feature of the piece – a good 200 years before ragtime! Notice how the last note of the first bar is tied over to the first note of the second, similarly across bars seven and eight, 10 and 11, and also in the middle of bars as in three, six, nine and other similar places throughout the piece.

If you're unsure how to read the rhythm, take a trip to the *Acoustic* website and listen to the MP3 file I've recorded. The melody will be in the left of the stereo, the harmony on the right, and you can eliminate either by swinging the balance control across. ■

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MIKE DAWES FINGERSTYLE VIRTUOSO

‘OVERLOAD’

Mike uses his new song to demonstrate building material from the rhythm up

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED

Greetings once again noble students of the guitar, this month’s column is brought to you from a quaint little cafe in the East German village of Langenlipsdorf.

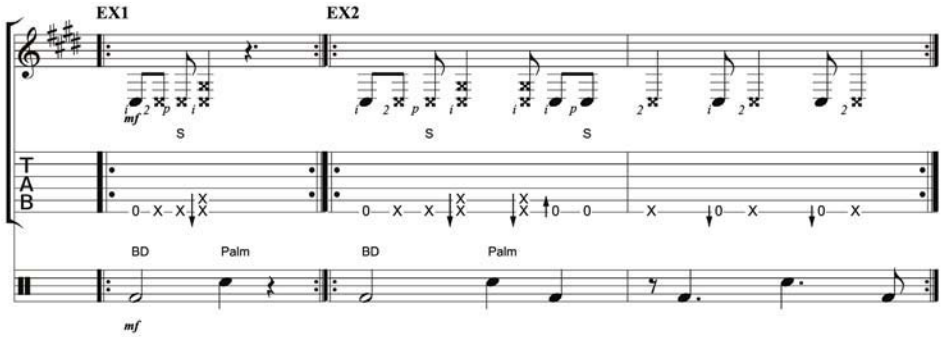
In this issue, I’d like to continue on the theme of fingerstyle composition. Last time we touched on one of my approaches, melody first, in which the player will come up with a melody (or ‘topline’) and proceed through harmony, enhancing the harmony, and finishing with percussion. This time we will look at building material out of a rhythmic stem. The example we are basing this around will be an extract of a new song of mine titled ‘Overload’. We are in DADGAD tuning dropped 1/2 step for extra meat (C#G#C#F#G#C#).

Sometimes, when we pick up a guitar, our hands just fall into a random position creating a spark, some kind of hook that our ears latch onto that could form the basis of a brand new composition. There is little thought in this, just improvisation. When I was backstage at the Blue Note in New York a few years ago (in the bathroom, great reverb!) my hands fell into the two beat percussive pattern based around the soundhole shown in **example 1** and something sparked for me. The kick drum is produced by the heel of the picking hand striking above the soundhole, the left hand accent is produced by touching the bottom string, but not fretting it, so it bounces into the fret wire. The snare effect is the palm of the picking hand slamming into the end of the fretboard, just to the left of the soundhole.

This spark almost immediately led into the two-bar loop I’ve given as **example 2**, which is tied together by an open string bass groove. The idea here is to create the feel of a complex drum groove featuring a 16th note hi-hat pattern and a little distinction/syncopation between the open string and kick drum. See if you can practise this loop as a way of getting used to these percussive techniques in a fun, musical way.

Now, **example 3**, which introduces some treble and middle in the form of open string drones and hammered double stops, we will

EXAMPLE 1 & 2



EXAMPLE 3

EXAMPLE 4

also be enhancing the bass-line with a few licks and runs to add interest...

This concludes the introduction of 'Overload'. We began with a simple beat and gradually built it up into something more complete, but we are not done yet. We need movement through chords, we need a bass-line that doesn't just hang on the root, and we need a kick ass (if a little cheesy) melody! Oh, hello, **example 4**.

This is the first real melody heavy section of the piece. Here we use all of the techniques from our intro but with a pop melody and funk bass-line as additional hooks. The really cool thing about this section is that it all came from that original two beat rhythm from the Blue Note bathroom, and you can really hear that in the piece. What sounds like a complex melody-led section is actually the product of building music in an unconventional sequence, something that I strongly recommend you try. Whatever it is that your fingers come up with, grab that spark and let it take you where it wants to go. ■

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RAYMOND BURLEY CLASSICAL GUITARIST

'VALS'

Ray Burley tackles an ABRSM Grade 7 piece by José Ferrer

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

José Ferrer (or to give him his full name, José Ferrer Esteve de Fujadas) was born in Girona, Spain in 1835. Ferrer initially studied with his father before continuing with José Brocá – another guitarist and composer whose music is worth exploring. In 1882, Ferrer moved to Paris (one of the main cultural centres of the time) to take up the position of guitar tutor at Institut Rudy and Académie Internationale de Musique. He remained in Paris for 16 years before returning to Spain to teach at the Conservatori Superior in Barcelona. He died there in 1916. Although his guitar output is quite substantial, very little of it has found its way onto the concert platform or on disc.

While Ferrer's 'Vals' (Waltz) might not be considered a major contribution to the guitar repertoire, it has a certain charm. I think the phrasing is quite obvious throughout. In the opening bar, and its repetitions, you have the option of playing the accompanying chords with *p*, *i* and *m* or three fingers alone – I use the latter option. Whichever you choose, bear in mind that the melody must project above the accompaniment.

The transition from bar one to two requires a slightly unorthodox technique: rather than employing a conventional barré, simply collapse the tip joint of the first finger to cover just the first and second strings; when the final open E is required raise the finger into the normal playing position. Because of the left hand stretch in bars five and six, you may find my fingering suggestion a little tricky. When the first finger is required, use the base of the finger rather than the tip, this will give you a larger finger span and avoid the left hand being twisted unnaturally. For a more

“Ferrer’s guitar output is quite substantial, and while his ‘Vals’ (Waltz) might not be considered a major contribution to the guitar repertoire, it has a certain charm”

consistent tone I prefer to keep the melody, beginning at bar nine, entirely on the covered bass strings. The transition from bar 15 to 16 will be smoother if the second finger slides from the A to the following G sharp.

My suggested fingering for the third beat chord in bar 30 may seem odd, but, as you’ll see, it again provides a smooth transition to the following chord. The direction in bar 32 shown in brackets is to indicate that while a barré is not strictly necessary, it automatically dampens the open strings from the previous bar which otherwise might continue sounding and blur the texture. The semiquaver passage at bar 72 is quite straightforward if the suggested fingering is followed, while the open E in bar 73 allows a smooth shift to second position.

Be careful when reading the chord in bar 70; it’s the B that’s sharpened and not the A, giving a basic diminished seventh chord. In the original version, the passage beginning at bar 80 had the inner voice beamed to the upper voice. I have amended this showing the full note values of the notes on the third string. The second finger can remain on this string for the full four bars.

A version of the piece (published by Faber) gives an editorial tempo suggestion of *vivace*; as you’ll see, I’ve altered it to *allegretto* helping to avoid it sounding too rushed. Feel free to disagree with this decision. The dynamic markings shown here are also my suggestions – the original has none.

Ferrer’s ‘Vals’ is in the current Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music Grade 7 exam syllabus; I had the pleasure of recording it for the Board’s exemplar CD; this version is also available on iTunes. ■

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PAUL BRETT VINTAGE GUITAR EXPERT AND 12-STRING AFICIONADO

FULL TAB ONLINE

12-STRING CORNER

Paul Brett takes a look at the bluesman's instrument brand of choice, Kay, and reveals info on his new signature Vintage model

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

From the late 1890s until it was taken over by jukebox maker Seeberg in 1965, Kay was possibly the second largest manufacturer of musical instruments in the States and quite simply the brand that bluesmen favoured. It made instruments carrying brand names like Stromberg, Kay Kraft, and Recording King (Gibson also made these), Dobro, National, Oahu, Paramount, SS Maxwell, Airline, Supertone and Silvertone for Sears and other catalogue companies, the most notable being Montgomery Ward. It is said that Kay was on a par with Gibson in the 1950s, with endorsement models from the great Barney Kessel and Jimmy Reed. It's interesting to look at which other bluesmen used Kay: Sleepy John Estes, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Buddy Guy, Lightnin' Hopkins, and the great slide player Elmore James, who played a Kay Dreadnought with added electrics, specifically a DeArmond Rhythm Chief Model 1000.

Kay built both cheap and expensive guitars, and, under the Stromberg-Voisinet and Kay Kraft brands, it produced the innovative Venetian style guitars, as well as the Kay Kraft adjustable neck models. These could transform from classic style to steel by the adjustment of a mechanism located in the heel joint of the neck. In fact, they carried two large internal wing nuts for this purpose. Ry Cooder is one notable user of these guitars, which have become highly collectable recently. In 1967, the company was again sold to Valco, the parent company of National and Supro. Kay also made a fine professional series of acoustic guitar in the 60s, which are well worth collecting and playing – if you can find one. I obtained one of the rare 12-strings around 12 years ago and was incredibly impressed with the sound and ease of playability. I have actually seen a couple of six-strings in the series but never spotted another 12-string, so if you see one, and they are still affordable, I would recommend you snap it up!

I have just received a sample of my new Viator 12-string travel guitar for testing. This will be the sixth guitar I have designed for Vintage. I can't actually go into specifics as it is still under test and I'm always reluctant to expound on a new product until I have put it through its paces. I am currently trying out different string gauges and combinations along with all sorts of

EXAMPLE 1

“Kay built both cheap and expensive guitars, and, under the Stromberg-Voisinet and Kay Kraft brands, it produced the innovative Venetian style guitars, as well as the Kay Kraft adjustable neck models”

EXAMPLE 2

tunings in order to give it a thorough workout prior to approving release. This is the part I always get nervous about – there is always the risk that what you dream up won't work out – but it is also the most exciting part. I recall John Joyce designing two acoustic JJ models for Aria in the 70s that he had great hopes for. He designed a six- and 12-string in the traditional blues style with pyramid bridges, but when they came back from Japan, was dissappointed that they didn't sound like he wanted them to. The best laid plans of mice and men and all that. However, I have to say they were quite tasty all-round folk guitars and have actually become collectable over the years while rising in value. Every instrument that Vintage has done for me so far has turned out exactly as I dreamed, and so, it would seem, has this new Viator 12-string. It will have the usual Fishman pickup system and an additional USB output that has proven very successful on the Viator six-string with antique finish. I hope to have all tests finished in a couple of weeks and then it's just a case of Vintage setting a release date.

I've got two examples for you in this issue: a small series of blues exercises in different tunings and pitch for you to expand your 12-string techniques. If you head to the *Acoustic* website there is a bonus example, which is a shorter inversion of **example 2** with a different chord pattern. Sound files are available online as usual. Thanks as always to Mark Thompson for the tabs. ■

For a taster of what to expect from Paul's new Viator, and a look at a Kay Professional 12-string in action, visit his YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/user/guitbrett

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COLLECTORS' CORNER

Paul Brett reminds collectors to keep casting a critical eye over any provenance an instrument might claim to have

Values and investment choices vary over time and over musical preference for sounds and genres. I did an article for the *New York Times'* financial magazine a few years ago commenting on what was collectable in Europe, and I stated that the choice was pretty much the same as the American market but because of sourcing, import duty and posting from the States to the UK, it made prices over here more expensive. At that time, the restrictions on exporting from the States were more lax than they are now because of the CITES and other such laws that affect the importing and exporting of protected resources. It hasn't got any easier over time and coupled with that, the source of many collectable musical items are not as easy to find as they were.

There are also a lot of fakes out there as the demand for vintage has increased, as have postal, import and VAT fees. The paperwork for exporting from the States had also become more demanding and takes longer than it did a few years ago, which also puts people off exporting to external markets.

The high end of acoustic prices for vintage Martins is still healthy, and perusing my Nashville-based colleague George Gruhn's site brings up a couple of 1930s Martins between $90,000 and $125,000. The former is a Martin D-28 made in 1937, listed as having "minor normal playing wear, neck professionally reset, OHC... a superb sounding instrument." The higher priced one was also made in 1937 and is an 000-45H, listed as "VG+, converted from Hawaiian to standard, neck professionally reset and refretted, replacement bridge and bridge plate, one of the last 12-fret 000-45 models produced, an exceptionally fine sounding instrument, HC." So you can see that hanging onto an old Martin has been a great investment over time. They hold their value too, so, arguably, looking for a cheaper one made later may also, over time, increase in value.

I also noticed that George is offering a rare E.D. Wilbur seven-string Tone Harp, made in 1916, probably by Oscar Schmidt. It is fully

complete with the button mechanics, which when depressed, raises the pitch of the strings. This was the pedal steel guitar's forerunner.

I found one of these years ago but it lacked the buttons so I've never been able to source another set of mechanics to test it out. George is asking $1,500, which, for a rare and historical piece of American guitar history, is a reasonable price considering that you may not find another in workable condition. It also comes with an original songbook and instruction manual and case.

Another aspect of collecting is to keep an eye on the spare parts market. If a guitar in total is, say, beyond the cost of repairing, then consider what the sum would be for stripping out the parts that may be valuable to someone who is looking for a replacement part for their guitar.

To illustrate this, I want to talk about an old Höfner arch-top I was given a few years back as its owner deemed it a lost cause. It was first introduced to the market in 1954 and often referred to as the Black Beauty. The model 458 was a deluxe version of the 456 with an all laminated body. Standard in size, 410mm wide and 80mm deep, it has a five-piece neck and a rosewood fingerboard adorned with plastic inlays. The one I have doesn't carry the original tailpiece, which is usually a trapeze style and adorned with the Karl Höfner logo. The tailpiece on my one is a compensated one usually associated with ones fitted on Höfner Presidents under the Selmer brand, so I guess this is a later replacement edition. The single pickup is a Höfner twin coil type 511 with exposed staples and a wide plastic surround, this, and the control panel, may also have been a later addition.

There is no bridge and the machine heads carry a couple of awful non-related replacement tuning knobs in grey on the bass side of the strip. Some of the laminate is also coming away from the neck join, probably because whoever tried to repair it used a claw hammer.

This can all be repaired, but sometimes it makes more financial sense to sell it for parts. Höfner original parts are worth plenty. For example: an original compensator tailpiece can sell around the $270 mark. A pair of strip machine heads in good condition can go for around $240. A plastic pickup mounting around $30, a scratch plate $95, a single control knob, $30, a vintage neck can fetch around $450, and the body even more. A pot from the 60s I've seen sell for around $60 and so on.

Original Höfner parts are rare to find and collectors will pay good money to restore their original guitars. There is quite a healthy market in collecting Höfners, and my mate Gordon Giltrap wrote a good book on the company and its guitars, which is well worth a read. It could even be argued that even after restoration to a guitar like this, you will make more money on selling the parts individually without the hassle!

"Of course you'll never realise the price that John Lennon's own Senator achieved at the Christie's auction in 2009, where it sold for a staggering $337,226, but as a guitar, it wasn't worth more than $600-700. Goes to show you what people will pay to own a legendary musician's guitar"

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The art of illusion also rears its head on occasion. A couple of years ago, someone put Robert Johnson's Gibson 1928 L-1 up for sale with an asking price of six million dollars. It made the headlines in the press but seeing the photographs online, it looked like a new guitar, which, if it was Johnson's, would certainly have shown signs of wear. There is also the conjecture that Johnson never owned a Gibson because, at that time, many photographic studios carried suits and prop guitars for artists with little money to have their pictures taken with. It's more than likely that of the two known Johnson pictures with guitars, he played the Kalamazoo KG-14, which was the cheaper version Gibson produced. Oh, the joys of collecting! ■

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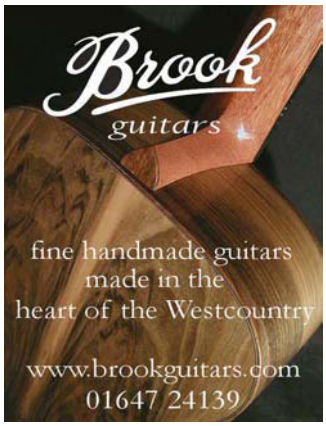

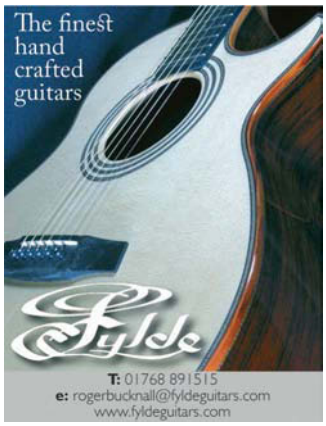

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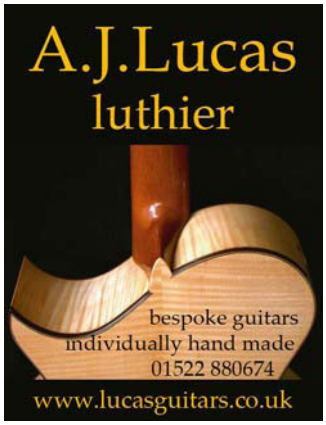

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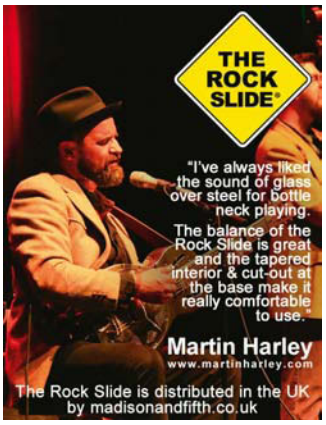

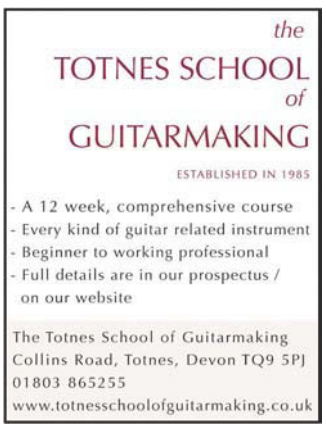

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CHRIS WHITLEY

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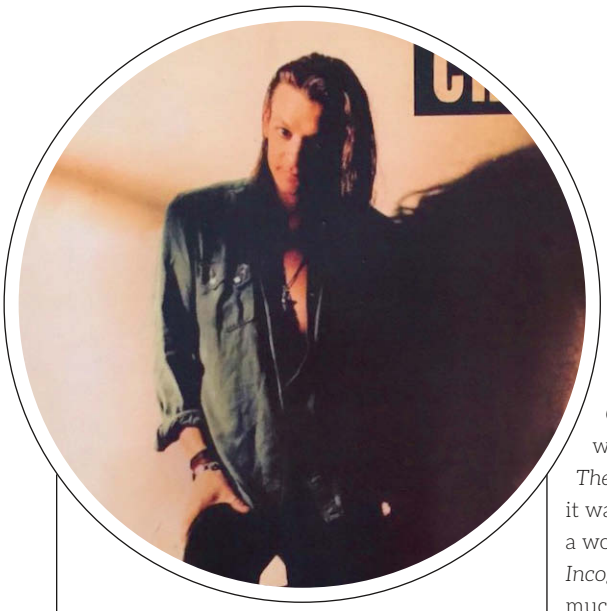

"God knows it's all been done," declares Chris Whitley, at the onset of his debut album *Living With the Law*, sounding more the spirit of a wisened Mississippi Delta bluesman than the young firebrand he may have been mistaken for. He then contradicts that statement by delivering a uniquely epic record.

If you don't know Whitley, you should. The singer-songwriter created haunting, mesmerising music immersed in guitars. Despite never reaching the commercial heights he so deserved, Whitley was a guitar hero, albeit a reluctant one, uneasy in the spotlight. His rootsy, bluesy Americana drew a hardcore cult and critical following, and posthumously his reputation only grows. Whitley's singular voice was combined primarily with resonator guitars for his initial musical forays.

A vivid memory of that I have is seeing him perform in the early 90s – looking more like an undernourished fan than headliner. First he clambered onto a small Greenwich Village stage, slung his signature 1928 Triolian across his sinewy torso and then passionately but expertly went for broke on the silver machine. That dirty-sounding National Steel and soulful singing made Whitley an iconic figure to his fans (including rock star Ann Wilson of Heart who has professed her love for his music).

Born in Houston, Texas in 1960, Whitley was raised in a creative household (father was an art director, mother a sculptor). When his parents divorced, he lived peripatetically, relocating often in the USA, then to Mexico for a spell.

Bewitched by the glory of Hendrix, Johnny Winter, John Fogerty and Muddy Waters, Whitley taught himself to play acoustic, electric and slide as a teenager. He dropped out of high school the year before graduation in favour of a move to New York City to pursue music. Busking was his first musical experience in the Big Apple and after being spotted by a music insider he moved to Belgium where he recorded a couple of records, garnering a following there.

Upon returning to New York, Whitley signed to a major label and then a chance meeting with producer Daniel Lanois led to the recording of *Living With The Law*. It was recorded in less than two days in Lanois' fabled New Orleans mansion studio under the tutelage of producer Malcolm Burn. Many of the tracks evoke a cinematic, romanticised America ('Big Sky Country', 'Border Town', 'Dust Radio', 'Phone Call From Leavenworth') and the record simmers with ambient guitar sounds and metaphorical lyrics that embrace both the sacred and profane. When he burst onto the music scene in 1991 it was littered with grunge. But this album's bluesy introspection and masterful songwriting set it – and him – apart.

Whitley cleverly utilised an array of guitar tunings, even devising his own to expand his sonic palette. He toured as the opener for Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers and his follow-up, *Din Of Ecstasy*, arrived four years after and was harder and rockier than *Living With The Law*. It was an artistic risk and although it wasn't as well-received as his debut, it was a worthy departure. His third release *Terra Incognito* (1997) didn't change his fortunes much. But *Dirt Floor* in 1999 – with its raw, stark sound and just Chris' vocals and guitar or banjo plus footstomp – restored satiation to his rabid fanbase as Whitley returned to his musical roots. Next came *Live at Martyrs'* in 2000, then, in quick succession *Perfect Day* and *Rocket House,* which included contributions from Bruce Hornsby, Dave Matthews and others. Three more albums followed: *Hotel Vast Horizon*, *Weed* and *War Crime Blues,* with the last two exposing Chris' political perspectives more than prior endeavours. His final studio outing *Soft Dangerous Shores* (2005) appeared amid a heavy touring schedule. Whitley was unable to finish the tour as, sadly, lung cancer took hold. He submitted to the disease in late 2005.

Chris was an visionary who conveyed the universal theme of human longing in an enigmatic way and was never derivative. In the pages of *Acoustic* his daughter musician Trixie Whitley once described the legacy her father left her: "I didn't pick up the guitar until a few years ago because I consciously did not want to follow in my dad's footsteps. But music is my mission. My main ambition is quality and honesty. I don't want to be bullshitted and I won't serve bullshit." Sounds much like her father's daughter. ■

Chris Taylor: Faith Owner and Songwriter

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